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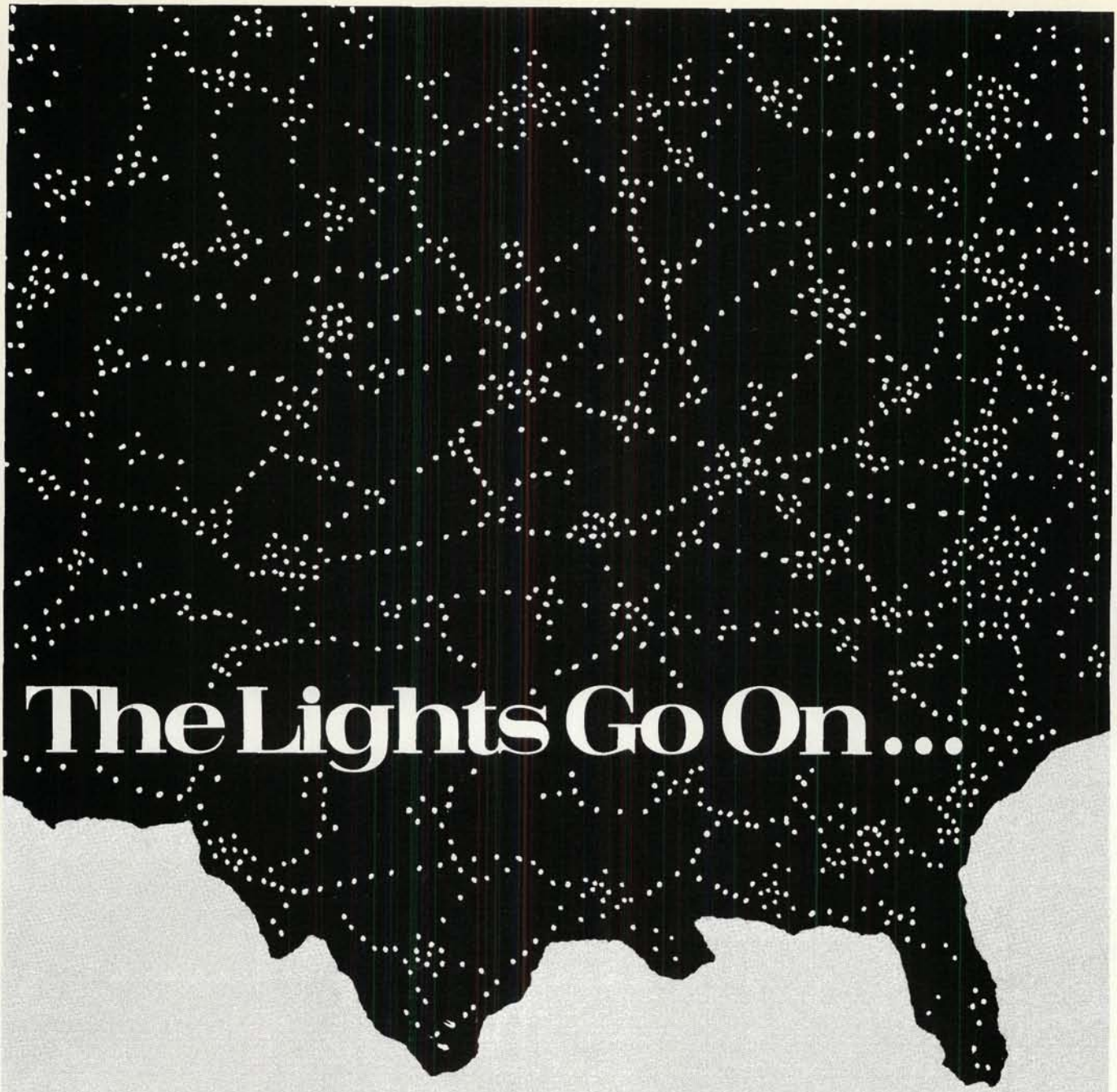

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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FROM WASHINGTON

TV Time For All

In 1976 the Supreme Court invalidated several key sections of the post-Watergate campaign reform law. The court held that the First Amendment right of free speech forbids any limits on how much a political campaign can cost, on how much of the candidate's own money he can put into it, and on how much any citizen can spend independently promoting the candidate of her choice. This ruling met with widespread ridicule in the press, which accused the Court of equating money with speech.

On March 18, the Court extended the same constitutional protection to the dread PACs, knocking down a $1,000 limit on independent PAC expenditures in presidential campaigns. This time editorial reaction was muted, even approving. There is widespread agreement by now that the campaign reforms have not been a success.

The Court's logic has been impeccable all along. In 1974, two years before the first campaign spending case, the Court invalidated a Florida statute that required newspapers to print a reply from any politician they criticized during an election campaign. The Court held that this was an unfair burden on newspapers' exercise of free speech. The newspapers all agreed.

Like this "right of reply" statute, the campaign spending limits were intended to bring some balance to the political debate. But unlike the "right of reply," the spending limits were designed to suppress the loud voices, rather than to amplify the weak ones. Yet newspapers had the hardest time seeing this as a First Amendment question. Imagine if Congress had passed a law that, in the name of fairness and balance, limited the amount of money that could be spent every year putting out a newspaper. The principle of campaign spending limits is exactly the same.

Dissenting from the March decision, Justice White complained that the Court has "transformed a coherent regulatory scheme into a nonsensical, loophole-ridden patchwork." That's true. Because the Court upheld limits on political *contributions*, a vast legal scholarship has grown up around the Jesuitical distinction between "independent" expenditures on behalf of a candidate and "coordinated" expenditures, which are held to be contributions in disguise. Other loopholes and exceptions carved out by Congress and by clever lawyers (who can turn any regulatory scheme into a "loophole-ridden patchwork") have assured that money is more influential than ever in politics. The main effect of the campaign reform laws has been to reduce the role of rich people around the country of all political stripes, who often bankrolled challengers, and to increase the role of Washington-based lobbyists and fund-raising professionals, whose interests are less broadly political than narrowly legislative (usually business oriented), and who tend to favor incumbents.

The rapidly emerging consensus, which extends from *The Washington Post* (in a recent editorial) to President Reagan (at a March press conference), is that we could hardly make things worse by simply abandoning the effort to restrict campaign spending and contributions, and by relying on detailed financial disclosure to discourage abuse. Because of the First Amendment considerations, I agree. But the problem remains that the need to raise huge sums of money has an unhealthy effect on who runs for office, who wins, and how the winners govern.

The cost of campaigns has skyrocketed in the decade since the Watergate reforms, meaning that any arguable good that came from regulating the sources of money has been overwhelmed by increases in the total amounts involved. As recently as 1980, the average successful Senate candidate spent about $750,000. In 1984 the figure was three million dollars. Losers spent about half

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CORRESPONDENCE

SAVING THE DEMOCRATS

To the editors:

As one of William Schneider's "serious social democrats" ("What the Democrats Must Do," March 11) who thinks state power must be used to redress social and economic wrongs, I could only agree with his argument that the Democratic Party must reassert its economic liberalism.

Schneider is correct as well in pointing to the American public's real (if often overstated) distrust of government as an obstacle that those of us committed to social and economic justice cannot ignore. But the solution is not, as he seems to suggest, to stop using state power to correct imbalanced power relationships. That would amount to a surrender to the overwhelming power of large corporations in today's society. Rather, one must use government in ways that are not felt as impingements on the ordinary individual.

This is hardly an impossible task. Few Americans think, for instance, of the Social Security Administration when calls for less government bureaucracy are in the air. One of the most important reasons for this is that Social Security is a universal program. As Schneider rightly points out, this enormously broadens its political base. It also makes the bureaucracy much less burdensome. When entitlements are universal, the government may spend more money, but it can operate in a much less intrusive way.

Another way of making society more just without enlarging the state is to strengthen countervailing power centers—that is, organized interest groups. Schneider's hostility toward interest groups is therefore hard to reconcile with his aversion to state action. If the state is not to be the instrument of social change, what will? The reliance on categorical government programs that Schneider decries is in no small degree a consequence of the legacy of hostility to all organized interest groups, including those of the working class, which afflicts one wing of American liberalism.

As one concrete example, organization of low-wage workers into unions would do more for economic equality than any conceivable combination of antipoverty programs, income subsidies, and tinkering with the tax code. Yet labor laws as currently written and administered make it almost impossible for unorganized workers whose employers strongly oppose unions (presumably the workers who need them the most) to get a union contract. If Democrats want more economic justice without expanding government, it would be hard to think of a better approach than a serious program of labor law reform.

BENJAMIN ROSS
Bethesda, Maryland

To the editors:

While William Schneider makes a variety of good points, he overlooks the one sure means for a national Democratic victory in 1988: the ability to communicate.

In the late seventies who would have ever imagined that Ronald Reagan would be such a successful candidate? Jimmy Carter dominated the national scene, and a candidate who was anti-ERA, anti-environmental, and pro-military seemed ridiculously out of step with the American voters. Yet in 1980 and again in 1984 Mr. Reagan had historic electoral victories. Why? The obvious reason has to be the man's ability to communicate his values and intentions to large audiences through television.

When Schneider criticizes Mario Cuomo for "extolling a memory," he forgets that Mr. Reagan is a Walking Memory, a throwback to those seemingly innocent, simplistic boyhood days of the president's youth. And it doesn't matter. Because Mr. Reagan is able to sell himself as a warm, convincing personality, he is the most powerful president we've seen in the last 20 years. In 1988 the Democrats should concentrate on one thing: finding a candidate—a *product*—that can be sold as convincingly through his theatrical abilities as Mr. Reagan has been in the last five years and Franklin Roosevelt was in the thirties and forties.

GARRY BOULARD
New Orleans, Louisiana

DEFENSE FUSSBUDGET

To the editors:

TNR's recent editorial lambasting the budgetary sophistry emanating from the Pentagon ("Disingenuous Defense," March 18) cogently inveighs against the fiscal mismanagement at DOD since 1981.

In attempting to expose the speciousness of several arguments in favor of more defense dollars, however, you lapse into disingenuousness yourselves. You acknowledge that military spending has decreased as a percentage of GNP, but add that the GNP itself has grown. But the point of the argument is that our relative commitment to defense within the context of overall output has declined. Saying that defense is getting a smaller piece of a bigger pie does not discredit the argument.

You also admit that the Pentagon is getting a smaller piece of the federal budgetary pie these days, but then argue that Great Society social spending has grown even more rapidly than defense. Why is it dishonest to point out that federal transfer payments have risen at rates much higher than defense increases? The point is that defense has not consumed a disproportionate share of the budget at the expense of social programs, a commonly held myth.

The argument about phony "cuts" made before the budget goes to Capitol Hill is indeed shameless, but Congress knows it, which is why even Senator John Warner spoke of the inevitability of "death, taxes, and defense cuts" in 1985. Weinberger may get the chutzpah award, but he didn't invent this kind of Washington-style dissembling.

WILLIAM C. BODIE
New York, New York

FIGHTING WORDS

To the editors:

In "Right-To-Life Porn" (March 25), Jefferson Morley succeeds remarkably well in aborting his own logic. Are we now to believe that Alexander Solzhenitsyn should have attempted to dismantle the Gulag camps rather than to chronicle their existence through his "literary investigations," thus arousing the conscience of the world? The discussion boils down to this: How do you best expose an evil once it has become *institutionalized*? I submit that the eloquent case which Harriet Beecher Stowe made against slavery in her prose was, in the final analysis, far more effective an attack on slavery than the raids of John Brown.

JONATHAN KENNEDY
Portland, Oregon

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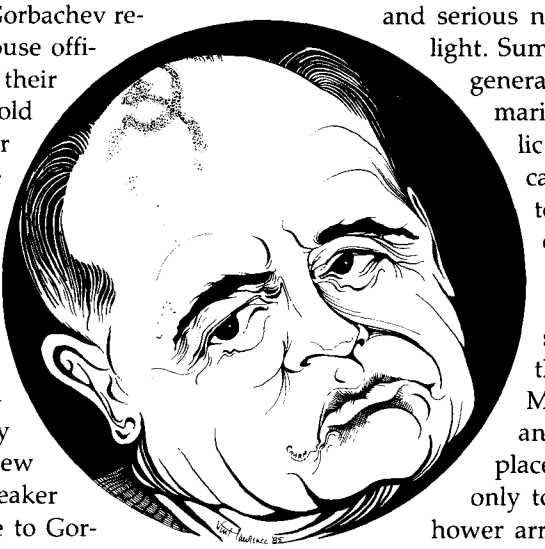
THE NEW REPUBLIC
MAY 6, 1985

SUMMIT TIME BLUES

Ronald Reagan is very anxious to meet Mikhail Gorbachev. First, he sent George Bush to Konstantin Chernenko's funeral armed with a handwritten invitation to the new Soviet leader. Let's get together, Reagan wrote, "at your earliest convenience." When Gorbachev refused to commit himself, White House officials began some summit agitation of their own. Chief of Staff Donald Regan told the press that the president hoped for discussions with Gorbachev in the fall. The next day, national security adviser Robert McFarlane reiterated the president's desire, emphasizing that a "meeting"—and not a full-blown summit complete with detailed agenda—would suffice. Still no definite response from Gorbachev. So the president, clearly growing desperate, dispatched a new emissary: Tip O'Neill. The House speaker delivered another handwritten note to Gorbachev, who in turn urged Washington to show the political will to overcome the "ice age" that has damaged U.S.-Soviet relations.



Of course some human contact between the leaders of the superpowers is desirable. It would certainly dediabolize the men for each other, ease a little of that intangible problem called "superpower tension," and improve at least the atmospherics for arms negotiations and trade talks. But it almost certainly would not accomplish anything more. A summit is not the best way to resolve concrete East-West differences. Making headway in arms control and human rights, or increasing trade and other exchanges between the U.S. and the USSR, requires long and serious negotiation out of the media spotlight. Summits tend to become press events: generally the participants are there primarily as an expression of Western public opinion (in the case of the American president) or for the opportunity to manipulate that opinion (in the case of the Soviet leader). This often leads to grand but empty gestures, to banner headlines in the short term and disappointment in the long term.

Most summits between American and Soviet heads of state have taken place in a climate of great expectations, only to end badly. The day after Eisenhower arrived in Geneva in May 1960, the Soviets matter-of-factly announced that they had shot down an American U-2 spy plane. Kennedy and Khrushchev squabbled over West Berlin during their Vienna encounter in 1961, and the Cuban missile crisis followed a short time later. Johnson and Kosygin did agree to a nuclear nonproliferation treaty during their meeting in Glassboro, New Jersey, in 1967; a year later, though, the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. Carter and Brezhnev signed SALT II in 1979, but then the Soviets

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invaded Afghanistan, and Congress failed to ratify the arms treaty. Only Nixon produced some significant results—SALT I and the mammoth 1972 trade agreement. But they too were almost negated when Congress placed restrictions on East-West trade with the Jackson-Vanik and Stevenson amendments, and the Soviets backed out of the trade deal.

THERE IS another reason the United States should cool its ardor about the summit. The more the West appears to want a meeting, the more Gorbachev will try to get in return. Already the Soviet leader has linked a summit to progress (on Soviet terms) in the arms talks. This he accomplished by declaring a temporary moratorium—a "freeze" he shrewdly called it—on the deployment of Soviet intermediate-range missiles targeted at Western Europe; if the moratorium is not reciprocated in the West by halting the deployment of Pershing 2 and cruise missiles, he then warned, it will be lifted in November. Now November is the likely time of a Reagan-Gorbachev meeting. The Soviet strategy, then, is that the administration will feel obligated to make an arms control gesture in order to save the summit.

Gorbachev has little to lose, since all he is busy freezing is an appreciable Soviet advantage. Moscow has already deployed 414 mobile SS-20s, each with three warheads. So far, only 102 of the 575 single-warhead cruise and Pershing 2s have been deployed. By November—when the deployments in Belgium and the Netherlands are made—about 200 will be in place. Gorbachev's moratorium is merely another attempt to prey upon NATO at the point of its northern political weakness, to batten upon dissension within NATO about its medium-range missiles. It is an old Russian objective, which failed miserably the last time around. But it is a political, not a military, objective. If it is NATO military strength that truly troubles the Soviets, they could have unilaterally restrained their own SS-20 deployments years ago, when a balance existed.

Still, some allies were anxious to accept Moscow's maneuver. Italian premier Bettino Craxi, for example, said the Soviet's gesture "deserves more than a simple nyet." In fact, that is precisely what the proposal warranted, and what it got when the Soviets raised it at the Geneva arms talks in March. By publicly offering a proposal that had already been privately rejected, Gorbachev makes it appear he is more interested in public relations gains than in real progress on arms reduction. He is making life very easy for those in Washington who also lack a compelling commitment to arms control.

It may be that the most advanced weapon in both the American and Russian arsenals is the public statement. Much of the media coverage of Gorbachev has centered on his great gift for the theater of diplomacy. Reagan, it is said, finally has a worthy challenger in what one commentator called the "court of international public relations." Oh, for the early seventies, when Nixon and Brezhnev were anything but media stars. They at least occasionally made concrete improvements in the U.S.-USSR relationship. A Reagan-Gorbachev encounter has far dimmer prospects. Expect tea at the United Nations, and sweetness and light for the television cameras, and maybe a visit to Bloomingdale's for more of those suits. But this nerve-racking world will remain the same.

FRIEND IN NEED

Of all the opera *bouffe* movements for "national liberation" perhaps the most preposterous is the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saquiyya al-Hamra and Rio de Oro. Usually referred to as Polisario, it lays claim to the territory of Morocco that was once the Spanish Sahara. The population of the region, a vast and desolate stretch of desert that contains substantial phosphate deposits, does not exceed 100,000. These souls do not constitute a nation or even a body politic in any meaningful sense of the term. Their struggle is against the elements, a primordial struggle altogether alien to the ideological wars mounted by Algeria (and, in the past, also by Libya) in the name of the indigenous inhabitants.

This, of course, is the key to the conflict: Polisario is a front, but not a front for the Western Saharans, who have neither the time nor the inclination for such politics. It is a front for Algeria, whose ambitions in the area are inversely proportional to the legitimacy of its interests. Not that there aren't any locals enlisted in Polisario; there are the usual sort of restless brigands who, in a time of transition, are drawn to revolutionary dogma and to revolutionary violence. Polisario is heavily armed by the Algerians, who themselves have a long history of animus to the moderate Moroccan monarchy. It has taken to shooting up the Spanish fishing fleet off the Saharan coasts and harassing Morocco's soldiers in the desert. It also assassinates, practices sabotage, and tortures. One thing Polisario won't countenance, however, is a referendum. Why not? For the usual reason such "freedom movements" don't want the people to vote: they'd lose. Instead of elections, they've announced a government in exile, which the Organization of African Unity has admitted to its roster as a member state.

In the very difficult political circumstances of the Islamic world, Morocco has been a faithful friend of the United States. It is host, for example, to the largest Voice of America facility in the world. Of course, some of the country's political maneuverings elude understanding. After having prepared the way for the Camp David agreements, King Hassan denounced them. More recently, he has teamed up, at least nominally, with Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi, the scourge of North Africa. Still, we have a

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substantial interest in the stability of this pro-Western and moderate Moslem regime only eight miles from Spain. We have acknowledged that interest for some time through economic assistance and military aid, last year to the tune of $90.7 million and $44.6 million, respectively. This year the administration has asked for $88.8 million and $51.9 million. Some of the money is designed to help Morocco defend itself against Polisario, and that's as it should be.

But there are always a few dreamy congressmen who want us to behave as if the world were a harmonious place. Representative Howard Wolpe of Michigan, chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Foreign Relations Committee, has introduced an amendment to the foreign aid legislation that would prevent U.S. military personnel from training Moroccan soldiers so long as a "conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front continues in the Western Sahara." Of course, if there were no conflict, Morocco might not need our help. Behind Wolpe's silly language lurks the silly notion that every conflict can be solved through conciliation. But this is precisely the kind of statement that encourages Polisario and its Algerian patrons not to conciliate. Representative Stephen Solarz of New York has introduced an alternative amendment that makes American training in the Western Sahara dependent on "an internationally recognized settlement" of the conflict. It is a distinction without a difference.

Representatives Tom Lantos of California and Gerald Solomon of New York see the situation in North Africa more realistically. They have offered a bipartisan amendment that acknowledges the reasons for our aid: "to support Morocco's legitimate defense needs and to discourage aggression by any country in North Africa against another." One charge no one has made is that Morocco is aggressing against anyone. This is the amendment that should pass.

NOTEBOOK

□ IT WOULD HAVE BEEN better if President Reagan had honored the German war dead on the anniversary of a purely military affair, rather than 40 years after the fall of Hitler's Third Reich. He had the perfect occasion last year, on the anniversary of D-Day, but instead gave in to British and French pressure to keep West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl away from the ceremonies. Now he plans to lay a wreath at the Bitburg military cemetery during his trip to Germany in May. Mr. Reagan is right that to honor the soldiers buried there (as opposed to the SS-troopers—couldn't he have found a better cemetery?) is to demonstrate the spirit of reconciliation that now exists between Germany and America. However, by initially choosing not to visit a concentration camp during the trip, Mr. Reagan demonstrated ignorance and insensitivity. The German soldiers buried at Bitburg fought with valor and courage. But if they had fought with a little more valor, and a little more courage, there would not be a Jew, or a Pole, or a Russian left alive in Europe today. These soldiers did not just fight for Germany, but for Hitler and Nazism as well. Mr. Reagan, despite all his criticism of the USSR, seems not to understand that it is impossible to make facile distinctions between a totalitarian system and the men who serve it, forgetting the one and honoring the other. Now it appears that the president will honor the victims and visit a concentration camp after all. But it doesn't appear that he is any more enlightened. In fact, the crass way the White House retreated on the issue, with aides first "studying the problem" and then announcing a shift in plans, shows that Mr. Reagan treats the Holocaust as just another example of special interest politics: if you visit so many German corpses, then go see some Jewish ones too. It is a lamentable comment on the Washingtonian habits of our supposedly anti-Washington president.

□ SOCIALISM IS NOT YET against the law in Alaska, but apparently several Alaskan state legislators think it should be. They have been complaining lately that Bill Ross, the new commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Conservation, is unfit to hold public office. Word is out that he hosted a Juneau radio show called "Weekend Left," and even went on a tour of Cuba while serving in a previous state administration. Worst of all, he calls himself a democratic socialist. Not least among the concerns of Ross's critics is that in his new job he will oversee a good deal of Alaskan industry, including North Shore oil exploration. Representative Fritz Pettyjohn recently wrote to Governor Sheffield that Ross's political outlook "directly contravenes Article I, Section I, of the Alaska Constitution," which holds that Alaskans have a right to "the natural enjoyment of the rewards of their own industry." "Since socialists don't believe in resource development by the private sector," he told Sheffield, "I feel his choice would be most unfortunate." What's really unfortunate is that elected officials in the United States have such a modest understanding of Article I, Section I, of the First Amendment.

□ FORTY YEARS AGO IN THE NEW REPUBLIC: "If there was ever any doubt as to how the Italians feel about the future, their farewell to Mussolini and his henchmen has clarified the matter. It was revolutionary justice, spontaneous justice, the justice that they had so long been deprived of, that brought an end to the Duce's career. The Partisans of Northern Italy took no chances with international war-crime and national purge commissions. Their part in the liberation of their country and their execution of all fascist big-shots without much ado suggest that they will not take a chance with the Bonomi government. Power will increasingly shift to the Committees of National Liberation." (The Editors, "The Tide in Italy," May 7, 1945.)

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What's worth fighting for.

WHEN TO INTERVENE

A CENTRAL PROBLEM of America's postwar foreign policy is that it finds itself with the responsibilities of empire, but without the self-justifying ideologies of the old imperial powers. Or, as Henry Fairlie put it in a comparison of the fall of Dien Bien Phu and the fall of Saigon, when Americans find themselves dodging the bullets of natives overseas, they cannot say to themselves, as the imperial armies of Old World could, that they are merely defending what is theirs. Take away the idea of ownership, take away colonialism, and how do you justify foreign intervention?

One would have thought that Woodrow Wilson had solved the problem early in the century, when he transcended the quasi-imperial notion of Manifest Destiny in favor of a crusade for democracy. It was under the banner of democracy that the United States was brought into World War I and, irrevocably, into balance of power politics. It remains under that banner now.

The idea of self-government does seem a wholly natural underpinning to American interventionism. But there are problems. One is historical. Wilson's choice of conflicts for first invoking the idea tarnished it. Whatever World War I was, it was hardly a war for democracy. Wilson used the democratic idea as the ideological justification for fighting a war where democracy was only remotely the issue. The cynicism that has greeted subsequent invocations of the democratic idea to justify other faraway fights is also often deserved. In other American interventions abroad—for economic, territorial, or purely geopolitical reasons—democracy has often been used as a flag of convenience.

The other problem is logical. There seems to be something self-contradictory about intervening on behalf of self-government. It is a lot more straightforward to intervene the old-fashioned way: on behalf of the alleged superiority of the metropolitan civilization. At best, to intervene on behalf of democracy means leaving quickly. Occupation mocks the idea of self-government. As in Grenada, we have to be thinking of going home on the day we land the Marines.

Still, these are not insuperable obstacles to a theory of intervention based on the notion of promoting democracy. First, there is no reason why past sinfulness should paralyze us now. If in 1954 we overthrew the freely elected Jacobo Arbenz, we now support the freely elected José Napoleón Duarte, whose land-reform policies are not very different from Arbenz's. Should the sins of 30 years ago in Guatemala discredit our policy today in El Salvador? By that logic the Catholic church's support for Solidarity and other social democratic movements is equally suspect, given the church's historical record on democracy. To admit that the democratic idea has been abused in the past is to say no more than that democracy, like equality, fraternity, and other good causes, has a long history. It is reason for vigilance, not for surrendering the idea.

The second obstacle must be acknowledged directly: although democracy can be brought at the point of a bayonet, it flourishes best if the bayonets are quickly removed. Yet sometimes they cannot be. Take cases, successful cases, which is where a theory of intervention should begin. Our bayonets, nuclear tipped, are still in Germany and Japan 40 years after the war. And though many Americans object to the cost, and some to the danger, there is no real opposition on principle. There is no real case to be made that it contravenes our values to be stationing troops on German soil. Yet Germany is not ours. We have no colonial claim. Still, we do have a persuasive reason: we are needed to defend a democracy.

BUT JUSTICE is not enough. Intervention needs a further justification: strategic necessity. To intervene solely for reasons of democratic morality is to confuse foreign policy with philanthropy. And a philanthropist gives out his own money. A statesman is a trustee. He spends the blood and treasure of others. On the other hand, to act purely for the reasons of strategy—to act imperially—is not only corrupting, but, for a democracy, unsustainable: a people committed to democratic values and exposed to the free flow of information will not long stand for costly intervention for antidemocratic objectives.

It is true that strategic necessity itself has a moral or at least an ideological foundation. American strategy has one overriding objective: to secure the safety of the United States and of the Western alliance. That alliance, in turn, is not capriciously cobbled together, but based on certain values. Protection of that alliance, and thus those values, from a bloc inimical to both requires the exercise of realpolitik. Or, to put it another way, the struggle between the democracies and the Soviet bloc hinges on many things. One of them is the fate of the unclaimed territory between them. The struggle between the blocs can be won (in the nuclear age, it must be won, because there is no alternative) by indirection: by surrounding the other side, stripping it of its outer defense, and ultimately putting it in a position where it must bend its will to the other. Containment was invented to prevent just that from happening.

Western realpolitik does, therefore, have a moral foundation. But that does not mean that anything goes. There may be extreme circumstances (Hitler, for example) under which one may ally oneself with a monster (Stalin). But a sustainable theory of intervention cannot argue from the extreme. It cannot, for example, address itself only to ends. It must ask not only "What does this intervention do for the alliance?" but also "What does it do to the country where the intervention takes place?" The Kantian injunction to treat individuals as ends must have application to nations as well. An intervention must not only defend the perimeter or sea-lanes or chromium mines of the alliance; it must better the condition of those on whose behalf we intervene.

Two criteria, then: intervention must be both morally justified and strategically necessary. If these criteria ap-

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pear too general and all-encompassing, let me point out that they exclude, and are meant to exclude, considerations that tend to dominate American debates over intervention: international law, world public opinion, and the public sentiments of our own allies.

I argue instead for a kind of global unilateralism in the moral arena. We should be confident enough of our own values, and of our own ability to discern what actions abroad will promote them, to act accordingly without being bound by the verdict of others—like the World Court, whose composition and ideology is far less democratic than that of the United States Congress; like the U.N., according to which the fight against racism should have taken us by now to the beaches of Tel Aviv; or like the Organization of American States, once aptly described by Irving Kristol as "a kind of mini-United Nations where we can be voted down in only three languages, thereby saving translators' fees." We did not need any of these agencies to help us decide on the nature of the Coard regime in Grenada. And we can debate the nature of the Duarte and Ortega regimes quite adequately without either their advice or consent.

WHAT ABOUT our allies' views? Some, like Robert Pastor, a Latin American scholar and NSC aide in the Carter administration, argue that it is a contradiction of the democratic idea for the leader of an alliance of democracies to act alone; global unilateralism defeats its own democratic purposes. There are two answers. First, our allies, particularly our smaller allies in the Third World, are not free agents. They are bound by weakness and fear. They are subject to the kinds of threats and blackmail from which the United States, owing to its power, is immune. Which of Nicaragua's neighbors can say in public what it tells our congressional delegations in private?

Moreover, global unilateralism is not really a choice; it is an existing reality. The European democracies, exhausted by two world wars, depleted and turned inward, did decide to place the ultimate responsibility for their safety in the hands of the United States. It is a fact, unpleasant perhaps, but a fact nonetheless. The United States would prefer otherwise. It constantly tries to change that fact by urging the allies to do more for their own defense. The results of these attempts are well known.

An American foreign policy should be confident enough to define international morality in its own, American terms. Is that parochial? I think it is parochial to do otherwise. If we take our own ideas about democracy, rights, and self-government seriously, then it is the height of parochialism, and worse, to believe that these values are applicable only to a few largely white Western countries. We used to hear arguments about what a luxury democracy was in India. It took 30 years for Western intellectuals to realize what the Indians knew on day one: it is a boon. One hardly hears the luxury argument made about India these days. That kind of talk has rotated to places like El Salvador. If democracy succeeds there, it will rotate again to other unfortunate places. If we believe democracy is good for us, then we must believe it will be good for others.

Everywhere? The usual charge against moral unilateralism is that it is hypocritical. If, for example, the U.S. is really trying to overthrow the Sandinista government for Arturo Cruz's reasons—i.e., to create a genuinely pluralist democracy—then why has the United States not created a *contra* force in Haiti? Why not support the ANC in South Africa?

THE REPLY is clear. Moral justification is a necessary condition for intervention. It is not sufficient. Again: foreign policy is not philanthropy. One doesn't intervene purely for justice. One intervenes for reasons of strategy, and if justice permits. Neither Haiti nor South Africa is about to allow itself to be used for the projection of Soviet power; the same cannot be said of Nicaragua. (It is true that the oppression of the South African and Haitian regimes may ultimately produce successor regimes hostile to the United States; dealing with the long-range threat requires a different strategy, which is discussed below.) We should commit ourselves only in those places where our interests are threatened—with a severe constraint: that any form of intervention should conform to our notions of democratic morality.

But how to define strategic necessity? It depends, of course, on where one locates the perimeter of American interests and on what one thinks is the nature of the threat to those interests. But strategic arguments are not wholly arbitrary. We can start with areas of consensus. Even those dreaded San Francisco Democrats place NATO, Japan, the Persian Gulf, Israel, Central America, and the Caribbean within the Western perimeter. Even during the 1984 primary campaign Gary Hart expressed willingness to use force to defend the Persian Gulf. And later Walter Mondale declared that a Soviet base in Nicaragua would warrant an American quarantine. At the time of the false MiG alarm in Nicaragua, there was much talk of air strikes and little dissent even from congressional Democrats.

The heart of the argument over strategy is less "What is worth defending?" than "What kind of regime in those agreed places worth defending is compatible with our interests?" In a place like Central America or the Caribbean, where our principal aim is to keep the Soviets and the Cubans out, the question becomes "Who is most likely to keep them out?" A coalition government in Salvador? A treaty-bound Ortega in Managua? A Coard-Austin junta in Grenada? The strategic question translates ultimately into a political question. It requires a political answer.

The best political answer is that in much of the Third World the most reliable repository of American strategic interests is what is sometimes called the third force. True, sometimes, as in Iran in 1979, the third force is an illusion and an excuse not to support the lesser of two evils. But our choices are not always so meager. The degree of Duarte's success in El Salvador is all the more remarkable because of the weakness of the Salvadoran center and the improbability that a viable third force could be found. The United States should desperately be seeking to support and promote the democratic opposition in places like the Philippines, Chile, South Korea, and South Africa; the demo-

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cratic opposition in Nicaragua; and the democratic government in El Salvador. It does not matter whether our thugs or their thugs are in power. We have learned through bitter experience in places like Cuba and Nicaragua, as we may soon learn in Chile, that our thugs are a fragile vessel for American interests, and their tactic of attacking the center to preserve themselves can only smooth the way to ultimate power for the extreme (and anti-American) left.

A third-force strategy is not a prescription, but a guide to thinking about American strategic needs. Even more important, perhaps, it may be a way to for ideological adversaries at home to work toward a new consensus on how and to what end the United States should intervene in the affairs of other states.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

Why did the reporter cross the road?

MEDIA REALIGNMENT

BY FRED BARNES

REMEMBER the liberal press? While Senator Jesse Helms gripes about the "left-leaning media," more thoughtful conservatives have been among the first to spot the rightward drift of the press. "Conservatism isn't the regnant ideological voice of the American media, but it's on the march," says Patrick Maines, a former advertising manager at William F. Buckley's *National Review* and now president of The Media Institute. Reed Irvine, the chairman of Accuracy in Media, which has been hectoring the "liberal media" since 1969, says, "The snide carping at Reagan has been toned down. The press corps was a bit humbled by the election returns."

In fact, the press's drift began well before Reagan's reelection. Media realignment and the emergence of Reagan are signs of the same phenomenon: the conservative trend in American life that began in the late sixties and quickened in the late seventies and early eighties. Liberal ideas faded in popularity, and liberals went on the defensive for the first time in half a century; conservative ideas gained popularity, and conservatives took the offensive. The press soon began to reflect the shift in political power. A sizable segment of the press now celebrates capitalism and is unabashedly nationalistic, questions liberalism and is unapologetically complacent. This is not to say that the so-called "prestige press"—the TV networks, the newsmagazines, and the three newspapers of national influence, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*—has been captured by conservative ideologues. But conservative thinkers and ideas have infiltrated what were once regarded as enemy lines.

Is this conservative trend a healthy restoration of political equilibrium, a necessary antidote to the "liberal bias" of the past? Or has the press succumbed to the conservatism of the times and abandoned its independence? The answers, of course, depend on one's definitions of objectivity and fairness. But however one defines them, it is clear that conservatives have a voice in the media that they haven't had before.

Media realignment has been marked by four big events and a succession of small ones. First and perhaps most important was the rise of George Will, whose surge to national influence was crowned last year when he was named the lone commentator on ABC News. Will, whose conservatism can be stuffy and pedantic as well as forceful and unswerving, now reaches the largest audience of any journalist in the country. Second and third (and almost as important) were the creation of two fresh news operations, Cable News Network in 1980 and *USA Today* in 1982. Each is more conservative than its competition. And fourth, over the last half-dozen years there has been *The New York Times*'s growing receptivity to neoconservative ideas and writers.

As for the smaller events, *The Washington Star*, which had been a voice of political moderation and the sole competitor of *The Washington Post*, folded in 1981, only to be succeeded by *The Washington Times*. The *Times*, owned by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, is aggressively conservative and fiercely anticommunist. Although its circulation is a negligible 75,000, it is read widely inside the Reagan White House. Indeed, the president himself is said to read it regularly, starting with the funnies. "The McLaughlin Group" has raced past "Agronsky and Company" as the hot political chat show on television. "McLaughlin" has a strong conservative tilt; "Agronsky" doesn't. Though first broadcast only three years ago, "McLaughlin" is carried on 168 PBS and two commercial stations; "Agronsky" is broadcast on 37 PBS stations and five commercial stations. ("McLaughlin" is helped by the fact that the Edison Electric Institute distributes the show free of charge to any public TV station that

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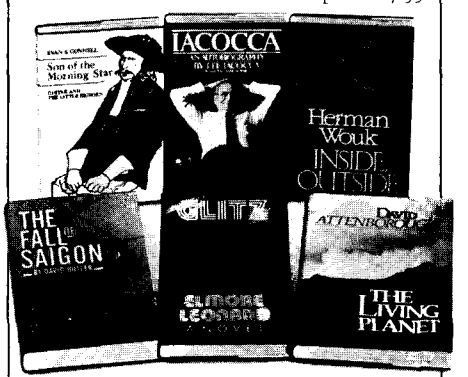

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wants it. "Agronsky" must be purchased from Post-Newsweek Stations Inc.) One of McLaughlin's regular panelists, lapsed liberal and former TNR executive editor Morton Kondracke, has become Washington bureau chief of *Newsweek*, replacing Mel Elfin, a friend of Walter Mondale's and an occasional panelist on "Agronsky." At *Time*, meanwhile, the chief Washington columnist, Hugh Sidey, once a close friend of President John F. Kennedy, has become a Reagan admirer.

And then there is the White House press corps. During Reagan's first term, reporters regularly took the administration to task. *Newsweek* called Reagan "detached" from the process of governing. After press conferences, newspapers including *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* ran separate stories about Reagan's mangling of facts. CBS News regularly pilloried his economic program as cruel and ineffective. But none of it had any effect on Reagan's popularity.

Now White House reporters are given to lamenting their ineffectualness. Three months into Reagan's second term, Ralph Nader sponsored a seminar on "The White House Press Corps—Problems in Captivity," at which a panel of reporters flailed themselves. "We haven't been as aggressive with this president as we should have been," said Saul Friedman of the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain. "The reason is, it's difficult in this milieu . . . in which editors, politicians, folks back home . . . don't want you to go after the president."

Conservatives are far from achieving dominance over the media. Most reporters, especially those who cover national news, regard themselves as liberals. *The Washington Post* and *The Boston Globe* are still generally liberal newspapers—and adversarial in their approach to the Reagan administration. The TV news shows continue to report critically on military spending and the effects of cutbacks in federal programs for the poor. But there are more competing voices in the media now, and a few changes of heart. The result is a perceptible jump to the right in the media's ideological center of gravity.

WILL IS the most visible symbol of the shift. He came to prominence by writing anti-Nixon columns during the Watergate years. More than other columnists, Will reflected the deepening national conservative mood, especially on conservative and defense issues. He led the pro-military bandwagon that emerged in reaction to Jimmy Carter. And he was reliably conservative on social issues like abortion. In 1980 he attached himself to Ronald Reagan. By the time Reagan was inaugurated, Will was ubiquitous—a syndicated column twice a week, fortnightly pieces on the back page of *Newsweek*, appearances on ABC news shows, the hosting of a well-publicized dinner party for Reagan. Finally in 1984 came his position as commentator on ABC's "World News Tonight," where he appears two or three times a week.

Will is the first conservative commentator on network television (you can't count Howard K. Smith, who was a hawk on Vietnam but liberal on most other issues). "I dare say I'm the only person on network television regularly who in 1964 voted for Barry Goldwater," Will announced on the air last March. Will's boast aside, this is a big breakthrough for conservatives. "Will reflects change all right—in America and in the perception of America by media moguls," wrote columnist Ben Wattenberg last July. "But it is important to note than in an electronic age this sort of decision not only reflects change but engenders it. An articulate and attractive conservative voice in so many homes will switch some opinions. More important, such a voice tends to rally and energize those who will say, 'Well, that's what I've believed all along.' Finally, it influences other voices in the media: they will have to deal with some arguments that could have been previously ignored or trivialized."

Wattenberg touches on the central issue of media politics: the balance between engendering political change and reflecting it. Conservatives obviously welcome Will's appearance on network television; if he engenders change as well as reflecting it, so much the better. They are less sanguine about broadcasting decisions by network executives that might influence opinion in liberal ways.

Many conservatives have worried that Will might feel compelled in his TV commentaries to soften his views to accommodate a nonconservative audience. If anything, he has been more hard-line than ever. He has argued to an audience of ten million that the MX should be authorized; Edwin Meese III confirmed as attorney general; Jeane Kirkpatrick named *Time*'s Woman of the Year; Libya punished harshly for promoting terrorism; a war launched against users as well as dealers of cocaine; the Soviets denounced for the shooting death of Major Arthur Nicholson in Berlin in April. What's more, he has called for overthrowing the Sandinistas and warned against economic pressures on South Africa. Far from passively embodying the conservative mood, Will is actively promoting it.

At *The New York Times* such forthright conservatism is not in vogue, but a close cousin—neoconservatism—is. This is not really surprising. Neoconservatism is the creation of New York intellectuals, some of them friendly with *Times* editors, including executive editor Abe Rosenthal. Next to *Commentary*, *The New York Times Magazine* is now the most reliably neoconservative publication in the country. Virtually every issue contains an article by a neoconservative—Michael Novak assaulting liberation theology, Robert W. Tucker calling for a new Reaganesque brand of détente with the Soviet Union, Morris Abram zinging racial quotas, John Vinocur touting Clint Eastwood as a serious actor and filmmaker.

IN RECENT MONTHS *The New York times*'s Op-Ed page has been studded with conservative columns by people like Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary*, and David Smick, spokesman for supply-sider Lewis Lehrman. The paper's foreign news coverage often takes an anticommunist tack. Raymond Bonner, who had covered Central America for the *Times*, was called back to the United States in 1982. He had regularly reported on discrepancies between the administration's public version of events

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in El Salvador and information contained in the embassy's classified cable traffic. Conservative media critics, especially Reed Irvine of AIM, had singled out Bonner for being overly critical of the Salvadoran government, and welcomed his transfer. There has also been a significant change in the *Times*'s cultural reporting. The paper, for example, recently hired Richard Grenier, the movie critic for *Commentary*. In one of his first pieces, Grenier skewered what he called "treason chic," the whitewashing of spies for the communist bloc in a spate of plays and movies such as *Pack of Lies* and *Another Country*. (Grenier, though, may not be the most reliable ideological ally. Geoffrey Stokes of *The Village Voice* notes that Grenier's review of *Apocalypse Now* for *Commentary* criticized the film's "unmistakably sophomoric, not to say, semi-educated quality." But in *Cosmopolitan* Grenier proclaimed the same film "so gorgeous, so technically magnificent, so ambitious and laden with meaning, that—whatever side you take—you must see it.")

CABLE NEWS NETWORK and *USA Today* represent efforts to outflank the journalistic establishment. CNN, formed in 1980 by Ted Turner, offers 24-hour news to 29 million subscribers. "It's a conservative network," says Patrick Maines of The Media Institute, all the more so since CNN decided recently to drop Daniel Schorr, its chief correspondent and house liberal. CNN's news coverage is straight, but its emphasis on economic issues, with five separate business shows, is supportive of unfettered capitalism. Still, the source of CNN's reputation comes from two other shows, "Crossfire," the network's most popular program, and "Evans and Novak."

Patrick J. Buchanan, the new White House communications director, made his name as one of two panelists on "Crossfire" (with Tom Braden as his liberal counterpart). Buchanan brutally questioned liberal guests, a task taken up now by columnist Robert Novak or Cal Thomas, a Moral Majority official and columnist. Novak and his partner Rowland Evans also do a twice-weekly "Insider Reports" on CNN. Not long ago they hammered Democratic national chairman Paul Kirk for urging the party to reject special interests while refusing to name any of them. "You don't consider blacks a special interest group," said Novak. "I am sure you don't consider women a special interest group. What about homosexuals, gays? Is that a special interest group?" Kirk ducked the question.

The celebration of capitalism is even more pronounced on three other cable networks. The USA network, which reaches 23.5 million homes, features "BizNet News Today," produced by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, as its main morning show. The Financial News Network, which goes into nearly 16 million homes, tracks daily business activity lovingly. On ESPN, a sports network that reaches 30 million subscribers, early mornings are devoted to "Business Times," which provides cheerful features on companies, corporate leaders, and new technology, as well as regular financial reports. And there is the Christian Broadcasting Network, created by evangelist Pat Robertson. It offers its own news programs, all on conservative and fundamentalist themes.

USA Today began publication as the Gannett chain's national flagship in September 1982, in the dark days of the recession. But from the start it was proclaiming the coming of the recovery with front-page stories on signals of a burgeoning economy. It did this well before the rest of the national press got wind of the turnaround. It remains relentlessly upbeat about the economy. One day it spotlights a boost in auto sales, the next an increase in industrial output. *USA Today* can clearly be accused of cheerleading, which is something the "prestige papers" and the networks can't. Last fall *USA Today* raved about its buying power for consumers. "Our Dollar Pounds the Pound," declared a headline. About the same time, *The Washington Post* was reporting on the role of the strong dollar in driving down foreign sales of American-made equipment. *USA Today* is also fervently nationalistic. It openly rooted for American gold medals on its front page during the Olympics last summer.

USA Today was initially given little chance for survival, even by Wall Street business analysts. It appealed mainly to sports fans, who were said to toss away the front, business, and features sections. "Everybody was skeptical [in 1982]," says John Morton, a newspaper industry analyst. "We didn't perceive there was any appetite for the publication. I'm a lot more optimistic now than I've ever been about its chances of making it." The paper has 1.4 million readers daily, and its ad linage has soared from 6.5 pages a year ago to 15.5. It lost $100 million last year, but according to Morton, "If they keep going, they can possibly be in the black in 1987." It would seem that the immediate future of this fourth national newspaper, more conservative than the others (though not more conservative than the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal*), is all but assured.

TOM BROKAW OF NBC and Hugh Sidey of *Time*, both media superstars, reflect the press's drift in different ways. Brokaw now appears in an ad for "NBC Nightly News" in which he implicitly defends the network against charges of liberal bias. He says firmly that he knows "of no more patriotic group than television journalists." But people shouldn't rely on them, he continues, to "get all they need to know in this complicated world. They must read books, good newspapers and quality magazines, listen to the radio, talk to their neighbors, go beyond what information is easily available. That's the best check on any potential abuse of power." This is a remarkable concession of network fallibility.

Sidey, who has written a column on the presidency since 1966, is not so defensive. He made his name in journalism first as a friend of John Kennedy, then as someone who was close to Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey. But he concedes that he's changed his political outlook. "You call it what you want," he says." I've changed. Yes, I've changed. The problems have changed. The world has changed. I say you have to sort through it." When he sorted through the election results last fall, Sidey

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sneered at the "pundits, academics, and campaign theorists" who debunked Reagan, at the "network commentators gamely trying to disguise their preference for Mondale," at the elitism "in the newsrooms of the big liberal papers, in the salons of trendy Georgetown." The world "beyond the Hudson and Potomac rivers" was no longer beholden to the Eastern elite for its political views. The "ordinary people" went with Reagan. In fact, Sidey's view might well be seen as the "trendy" one today. Now conservative bias is applauded just as vigorously as liberal bias was once denounced. Media realignment confirms the press's continuing susceptibility to political fashion.

The network ducks the conservatives' fire.

CBS UNDER SIEGE

BY MICHAEL MASSING

THE CURRENT conservative assault on CBS continues a long American tradition of network-bashing. Never before, however, have the attacks fastened so obsessively on one network. Senator Jesse Helms's organization, Fairness in Media, has urged conservatives to buy stock in "the most anti-Reagan network," in order to "become Dan Rather's boss." Representative Philip Crane, who has been anointed a spokesman for Fairness in Media, routinely obliges reporters with colorful quotes about CBS's liberal bias. And Ted Turner, the owner of Cable News Network, who regularly denounces the elitism of the broadcast establishment, badly wants to buy a network, but none so badly as CBS.

Such fine discrimination is curious. I have always found little to choose from among the three networks. The selection of stories, the quality of reporting, and the political slant are all, with few exceptions, unremarkable. Is the right on to something I've missed? In an effort to find out, I talked to some of the principals in the campaign against CBS. And the more I listened, the more convinced I became that it is not really liberal bias that disturbs conservatives, but aggressive, probing, conscientious reporting.

The charges against CBS made by officials of Fairness in Media and Accuracy in Media are rarely specific. More often the allegations are vague, visceral judgments about the network's performance over the years. The people who work at CBS are regarded as unpatriotic, even disloyal. The network is considered thoroughly disrespectful of authority, especially government. Above all, CBS stands accused of excessive negativism, of incessant criticism of the American way. The right especially objects to the manner in which economic news is treated on "The CBS Evening News"—or "The CBS Evening Blues," as Pat Buchanan has dubbed it. Nothing so enrages the conservatives as those fleeting mentions of GNP growth, followed by a solemn Ray Brady with the needy in Newark, or a dour Martha Teichner with the poor in Portland.

For proof of CBS's sins, I was directed time and again to a *TV Guide* report that appeared in August 1983. Purporting to measure anti-Reagan bias at the three networks, the study found that CBS cast the president in a negative light seven times more frequently than either ABC or NBC. By seeming to offer incontrovertible evidence of CBS's liberal slant, the *TV Guide* article has become holy writ for the right. James Cain, a North Carolina lawyer who helped to organize Fairness in Media, says that the article was a major factor in the group's decision to single out CBS.

On closer examination, however, the "survey" is far from conclusive. It was conducted by one individual—John Weisman, the magazine's Washington bureau chief—who viewed a single week of evening newscasts. Explaining the criteria he used, Weisman noted only that he categorized each story "as positive, meaning that it made the president look good; negative, meaning it made him look bad; or neutral, meaning it did neither." In other words, Weisman simply used his own personal judgment. What's more, Weisman took great pains in his article to explain that CBS's rating did *not* reflect "personal bias" against President Reagan but rather a more skeptical and inquisitive approach to official news than that taken by the other networks. Weisman himself says today of the piece that "I think it's a very pro-CBS article," showing, for instance, that the network was far more enterprising than either ABC or NBC. "The Fairness in Media people seem to be imputing to the article things that just aren't there."

For many CBS haters, though, the *TV Guide* article lends an aura of scientific respectability to what they know in their gut to be true. Most can tick off a list of accumulated grievances at will. "My quarrel with CBS started well before Jesse Helms came along," says Hoover Adams, editor and publisher of *The Daily Record* in Dunn, North Carolina.

Michael Massing, a freelance writer in New York, is a contributing editor of *The Columbia Journalism Review*.

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Adams is a friend of Helms and he has sued CBS on behalf of Fairness in Media in a bid for the network's list of stockholders. "In 1972 Dan Rather went after Richard Nixon at a press conference," Adams says. "I thought he was rude to the president. No one should be rude to a president." He also cited CBS's goading of Lyndon Johnson during the Vietnam War, its hounding of Bert Lance from office, and its harassing of Jimmy Carter during the Iran hostage crisis. Today, Adams complains, "Dan Rather sometimes seems to have more love for other countries than for ours."

Adams's inclusion of Johnson and Carter is revealing. The right, it seems, is bothered not only by criticism of Ronald Reagan but by challenges to presidents in general. In this view, the president is the elected representative of the American people and thus deserves to be treated with respect, even reverence. The journalist's chief tools—skepticism, inquisitiveness, criticism—are seen as rudeness.

To correct this "bias," conservatives seek major changes in the people who run CBS. Adams says his first move would be to remove Van Gordon Sauter, the executive vice president of the CBS Broadcast Group, who, probably more than anyone, has molded today's news division. Reed Irvine, the chairman of Accuracy in Media (AIM), would undertake a more general housecleaning. He is a CBS shareholder, and he regularly attends the network's annual meetings to harangue executives and urge changes on them, such as firing Walter Cronkite for "showing naive trust in the Soviet Union." CBS is the most frequent target of AIM's newsletters, which feature headlines like "CBS Should Retire Mike Wallace" and "Bill Moyers Strikes Out Again."

ACCORDING TO IRVINE, "CBS has been more aggressively liberal in its presentations than the other networks. The general tenor of the organization is unashamedly liberal. And the network is determined to put out its point of view." Irvine, too, makes the obligatory reference to the TV Guide piece. Interestingly, though, he notes that AIM has not found all that much to criticize on the evening news. More offensive, he says, are "60 Minutes" and CBS Reports, the documentary unit. AIM regularly criticizes both for undermining corporate America, weakening national defense, and toeing the Marxist line on Central America.

The right's assault on CBS takes strength from the Reagan administration's own special resentment toward the network. The Pentagon, for instance, fumed over "The Defense of the United States," the critically acclaimed five-hour dissection of the U.S. military buildup that aired less than six months after President Reagan took office. David Martin, CBS's Pentagon correspondent, notes that some military officers refer to the network as the "Communist Broadcasting System." And for the last four years " '60 Minutes' has essentially been cut off from the armed services of the United States," says Phil Scheffler, the show's senior producer. The Pentagon not only refuses all "60 Minutes" requests for interviews, it also withholds off-camera information.

The White House howled over "People Like Us," Bill Moyers's searing portrayal of how the Reagan budget cuts forced a working mother with an ailing son to quit her job in order to obtain Medicaid, bumped a victim of cerebral palsy from the Social Security disability rolls, and swelled attendance at a Milwaukee soup kitchen. The White House demanded equal time (CBS refused), and David Gergen, who was then communications director, held a special press briefing to rebut the broadcast. More generally, as Dan Rather told *The New York Times* in 1983, the White House has frequently telephoned him with "unrelenting" criticisms of the evening newscasts. (Around the time Pat Buchanan took charge of White House communications in February, the calls stopped without explanation.)

ONE MIGHT logically conclude from all of these complaints that CBS is going after the high-and-mighty with uncommon zeal. Ironically, though, the right's attack against CBS comes at a time when the network probably least deserves it.

Consider the CBS documentaries that have most riled the right: "The Defense of the United States," aired in June 1981; "The Uncounted Enemy" (which led to General William Westmoreland's libel suit) in January 1982; and "People Like Us" in April 1982. Also in 1982, the network broadcast two documentaries on Central America, both critical of U.S. policy; it has broadcast nothing comparable on the subject since. Over the last three years, CBS Reports has had its staff cut, its hours reduced, its programming denatured. The unit created by Edward Murrow now turns out programs on airplane crashes and organ transplants. And the recent "Atlanta Child Murders" converted a controversial news event into breathless docudrama.

"60 Minutes," meanwhile, continues to feature stories that exercise conservatives. It has portrayed the plight of Central American refugees, and exposed ties between the mob and the Shoreham nuclear power plant. However, in the last couple of years, "60 Minutes" has more frequently angered liberals than conservatives. In late 1982, for instance, the program incurred the wrath of organized labor by portraying the Coors brewing company as a caring, paternalistic enterprise and absolving the company of numerous union charges against it. A 1983 broadcast on the World and National Councils of Churches—one of the few in the history of "60 Minutes" to consume two-thirds of an hour—insinuated that the groups were supporting Marxist terrorists. The segment outraged church activists and provoked one of the largest outpourings of negative mail in the show's history. More recently, "60 Minutes" featured a glowing account of reforms undertaken by the government of South Africa. The program's assertions of black progress under apartheid surpassed even the optimistic pronouncements of the Reagan administration. AIM's Reed Irvine, for one, has taken heart from these programs. "In all my years of watching CBS," he says, "I've never seen anything like that."

"The CBS Evening News" still gets in its shots. It report-

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ed signs of the impending invasion of Grenada, challenged administration claims about the threat posed by Nicaragua's armed forces, and raised questions about the safety of Provincetown-Boston Airlines. The program's investigative "Insight" team has detailed the dubious financial dealings of General Dynamics, raised safety questions about the sweetener aspartame, and exposed the government's cover-up of cancer studies conducted at nuclear weapons facilities. Moreover, CBS continues to run compassionate pieces on the homeless, the hungry, the unemployed, and other castoffs from Reaganomics.

What doesn't much appear are hard-hitting political pieces. From the time Van Gordon Sauter took control of CBS News in 1982, the evening news has made a point of getting out of Washington and into the field. This has freed the network from having to cover hearings, press conferences, and other appurtenances of official Washington. However, the show is now heavy in features that cause a chuckle, elicit a sigh, or bring a tear to the eye. And the emotion comes in a nice, slick package—another current trademark of the evening news. Even Walter Cronkite has publicly criticized the program for growing soft.

Quantitative media studies are probably not the best way to determine network bias. By adjusting the criteria, it is usually possible to prove whatever the sponsor wants. But given the right's eager embrace of the *TV Guide* article, it's only fair to cite another survey recently completed at George Washington University. This was no one-man, one-week, seat-of-the-pants affair; it involved a team of researchers who, over a two-year period, viewed more than 1,000 items aired on the three networks. In the end, the study turned up no special slant at CBS. In fact, the project's director, Michael Robinson, recently concluded from the evidence that "CBS is, in some important respects, slightly more 'conservative' than the other two networks." And during the 1984 campaign, Robinson wrote, "CBS proved least critical of Reagan and Bush."

THE CHANGE AT CBS is most apparent in its recent experiments with prime-time public-affairs programming. A year ago, with great fanfare, the network unveiled "American Parade." Featuring the music of Charles Ives and the bromides of Charles Kuralt, "Parade" was a mélange of clichés about this great good land. We met homesick Marines on the U.S.S. Guam; toured West Point with a cadet who had fled Vietnam; viewed the face-lifting of the Statue of Liberty, that "great beacon." With flags aflutter and music surging, "American Parade" looked like a production of the USIA.

After six weeks the network saw "Parade" for the embarrassment (and ratings failure) it was, and took it off the air. A reworked version of the show, "Crossroads," died quickly too. The latest creation, scheduled to begin in August, is titled "West 57th Street" (where CBS has its headquarters). The pilot includes segments on Chuck Norris, the Rajneesh religious sect in Oregon, the fast-growing venereal disease chlamydia, and the accidental death of a soap opera star. Featuring four sleek young correspondents, "West 57th Street" might more aptly be titled "Yuppie Parade."

Bill Moyers, who is second only to Dan Rather on the right's enemies list, says that Fairness in Media is wasting its time. The image of CBS as an aggressive, independent network, he says, is a "hangover from the past." Moyers, who continues to work on documentaries at CBS, is grim about the state of journalism there: "It's increasingly hard to get serious journalism of depth and relevance on the network." He attributes the change less to political timidity than to the "appetite at Black Rock [CBS corporate headquarters] for higher earnings," which has pushed news further and further in the direction of entertainment. As the corporate side has asserted its control, the news division has lost much of the energy that made CBS distinctive—and "liberal"—for so long.

It seems undeniable, though, that the country's political climate has also played its part. The passage from "People Like Us" to "American Parade"—from stepping on toes to marching in step—marks the onset of a conservative reaction at CBS. As the country's mood has shifted, CBS News has kept pace. Thomas H. Wyman, the chairman of CBS, has been frank about this. Wyman came to CBS from Pillsbury in 1980, with no background in television or journalism. He recognizes the value of getting on board. Last year he told *The Washington Post* that he would like to see CBS's programming reflect the mood of the nation's political leadership. As an example, he cited "American Parade," which, he said, represented "an effort to show something of the fabric and vitality of what makes this country what it is."

FOR THE MOMENT, the Helms bid to take over CBS seems to have stalled. CBS has filed suit to block Fairness in Media's bid for its stockholders' list, contending that the group was trying to manipulate the market in CBS stock. It has also reportedly sounded out companies like General Electric as possible "white knight" merger mates. It is highly possible, of course, that Jesse Helms never seriously intended to take over the network. The anti-CBS campaign may instead represent a shrewd effort to galvanize conservatives across the country and elicit contributions to Helms's political machine. Moreover, given the public hearing Helms has received, he might succeed in affecting CBS's news coverage without actually having to take over.

There's an outside chance, however, that the Helms gambit could backfire. Although the network's corporate side has successfully reined in the news division, CBS continues to harbor many top-rate journalists who would like nothing better than to put the right in its proper place. Dan Rather in particular is not known for bending, especially to groups like Fairness in Media. He almost seemed to be sending a message during his recent trip to Havana, where he joked with Fidel Castro and accompanied him on an amiable stroll around town. Even Bill Moyers allows an uncharacteristic note of hope: "The threat from the right may be just what we need to get back to basics." □

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Mexico's one-party democracy feels the heat.

FIRE IN THE PAN

BY WILLIAM ORME

NINETEEN EIGHTY-FIVE will be Mexico's most critical political year since 1968. That year antigovernment protests were quashed by the massacre of more than 200 leftist demonstrators on the half-excavated ruins of an Aztec temple in downtown Mexico City. Unlike 1968, however, the threat to the government and its Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has controlled Mexico's politics for the last 56 years, is now coming from the right, from political amateurs who heretically question the national orthodoxy of statism and anticlericalism, and profess admiration for Reaganomics, venture capitalists, and Pope John Paul II. Unaccustomed to serious political competition, the PRI appears undecided whether to respond with co-optation, a minor cession of power, or repression.

The challenge is led by the conservative National Action Party, or PAN. The PAN, although it is 34 years old and has never won a major election, has been revitalized by a recent influx of small-town mayors, newly politicized business leaders, and other earnest middle-class reformers. The pro-business PAN, rather than the fractious, ineffectual Marxist left, has been the main beneficiary of resentment at the massive corruption and managerial ineptitude exposed by Mexico's debt crisis in mid-1982. The PAN since then has won an unprecedented string of mayoral contests in key state capitals. Now campaigning is under way for the July 7 midterm elections of seven state governors and all 400 members of the Chamber of Deputies, the Congress's lower house.

Whatever real political gains the PAN might make this year, though, would be far less important than the symbolic, almost mythic, impact of a PRI defeat in a major race. The PRI has never lost a national or state election. Party leaders worry that Mexicans might begin thinking the ultimate unthinkable—that the PRI could one day be voted out of power. The PRI's profound fear is that the electorate will embrace the exotic concept of "alternation in power"—throwing the rascals out peacefully by ballot. The notion is now advocated by prominent Mexican intellectuals from the Marxist left to the social democratic center to the free-market right. But the PRI's gubernatorial candidate in Sonora, Rodolfo Felix Valdez, voiced the party line last month: a "two-party system would prove highly dangerous for Mexico."

In Sonora, there is no question that the emergence of a two-party system has proven dangerous for Valdez. He is a colorless Mexico City bureaucrat facing a boisterous PAN candidate who has tapped the deep provincial distrust of the PRI leadership coterie in the capital city. In fact, despite the PRI conceit of referring to itself as simply "the majority party," it is already being reduced to a plurality party in those regions where Mexico is most urbanized, industrialized, and literate. The PAN can probably now expect between a third and a half of the votes in border-belt cities such as Tijuana, Mexicali, and Ciudad Juárez, all of which have more than a million inhabitants. The PAN should do equally well in Monterrey, the bastion of private industry, and Mexico City, where the parties of the left shave another 15 percent off the PRI's vote. With Mexico inexorably modernizing, what this portends for the PRI's future should be unnervingly apparent to the party's strategists.

The PAN is united only by opposition to the government and an inchoate loathing of all things leftist. Nevertheless, it is uniquely well positioned to exploit the vulnerabilities of the PRI. The PAN's president is Pablo Emilio Madero, a former engineer and the grandnephew and putative political heir of Francisco Madero, Mexico's first revolutionary-era president. Francisco Madero was an idealistic northerner who was assassinated in 1913. He is mourned by some modern historians, such as Enrique Krauze, the editor of the monthly review *Vuelta*, as "Mexico's last true democrat."

By dint of caste and commitment to the rule of law, Francisco Madero and his followers were at odds with their insurgent allies, Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, the radical advocates of justice for the peasantry. It is the mystical, populist "Villista" and "Zapatista" image of the Revolution that has been doctrinally enshrined in PRI-governed Mexico. Many of Madero's central demands—an independent judiciary and legislature, autonomy for local governments, the peaceful transfer of political power by majority vote—have been accorded only the perfunctory formality of a constitutional clause. Yet the PAN today is consciously reviving this old "Maderista" program with some success.

It is ironic that President Miguel de la Madrid and his team of fiscally prudent technocrats are under fire from the right. The administration may be the most conservative in Mexico in three decades. "Populist" is an epithet to de la Madrid. Since assuming power in December 1982, he has deliberately distanced himself from the free-spending, demagogic style of his generally discredited predecessors, José Lopez Portillo (1976-82) and Luis Echeverria (1970-76). His tough

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austerity program and adept debt negotiating are applauded by most corporate leaders, domestic and foreign.

Yet as Lopez Portillo's onetime budget minister and handpicked successor, de la Madrid is inevitably held accountable for the system's sins. "Who controlled Lopez Portillo's spending?" asks the PAN's Casamiro Navarro Valenzuela, who was elected mayor of Hermosillo in an anti-PRI protest vote two years ago. "Didn't de la Madrid know where the money was going? Isn't he responsible, too?"

The 1982 financial disaster could still prove to be "the PRI's Falklands," Lorenzo Meyer, a respected political columnist, suggested last month in *Excelsior*, Mexico's leading newspaper. The debt debacle may have given Mexico the opportunity to revitalize its democracy just as the humiliation of the military did in Argentina. Octavio Paz said in 1982, "If we don't wish to expose ourselves to grave harm, the Mexican system will have to be renewed through internal democratic transformation."

The survival of the Mexican system is not at stake in 1985, but its character may be. Supporters and opponents agree that de la Madrid would prefer to win the July elections cleanly. To ensure a high turnout of the PRI's rural and labor base, the government is channeling public works projects into key districts and lending state resources to the party's local campaigns. And if, despite these efforts, federal authorities were forced to ratify a convincing PAN gubernatorial triumph, one presidential aide noted, "it would improve our democratic image" both at home and abroad.

But many powerful PRI leaders believe the government cannot afford defeat anywhere. "We haven't lost an election in half a century and we're not about to start now," grumbles veteran labor boss Fidel Velazquez, who loyally tolerated drastic real wage cuts. Velazquez was rewarded with a gubernatorial nomination for an ally and a quarter of the PRI's congressional nominations for his union cronies, prototypically the kind of candidate the middle class most abhors. Some old-line party bosses argue that if their victories can be secured only by systematic fraud, so be it. "There are a lot of people in the party who think that we have to win at whatever cost," the de la Madrid aide acknowledged, while insisting "the president doesn't share that view."

THE 1985 POLITICAL season began ominously with Christmas week riots in the northern border town of Piedras Negras. A clumsy government attempt to overturn a PAN mayoral victory led angry oppositionists to blockade the international bridge over the Rio Grande. The demonstrators battled police in the streets with handguns and torched the town hall, all in full view of U.S. television crews. This display of violence was a major embarrassment to the government and the PRI's leadership. But instead of serving as a cautionary example, the Piedras Negras riots probably strengthened PRI hardliners like Velazquez, who proposed the cancellation of the PAN's legal registry in reprisal. It is already clear that in July the party plans to claim majority wins in all seven statehouse contests and in all but a handful of congressional districts. The government expects the PAN to denounce and document fraud but not in enough cases to conclusively document nationwide electoral robbery. And though more violent street protests are anticipated, party and federal government officials predict that they will be localized and easily controlled.

THE INSTINCT of the PRI to simply "tighten the screws," as one Mexican official said, represents a greater long-term threat to Mexico's stability than do more visible problems such as the turmoil in Central America and the $96 billion debt. Mexico is far from being a police state. There is more genuine pluralism within the PRI than in the entire functioning aboveground political spectrums of a Guatemala or an El Salvador. Yet the government is not hesitant about resorting to extralegal means to intimidate dissidents. Many, if not most, opposition politicians, diplomats, journalists, and high government officials operate under the assumption that their telephones are tapped. Political activists are often detained without charges or otherwise harassed; some are killed. In 1984 rural organizations reported that at least 69 peasants died in confrontations with authorities or with gunmen apparently protected by local PRI-linked political bosses.

Such abuses have become more common as local PRI governments are challenged at the ballot box. The manipulation of election returns by government "alchemists," as they are sardonically called, has also become more blatant as voter discontent rises. (Mexican officials routinely decline invitations to serve as foreign election observers out of fear that someone might return the favor.) Even people in the government voice concern that, by relying on the Interior Ministry's political-cum-security apparatus, the de la Madrid administration could radicalize an essentially bourgeois opposition and dangerously polarize the political process.

De la Madrid is acutely conscious of the need to break with the PRI's immediate past. He entered office determined to uphold higher human rights and election standards. Last June the independent Committee for Disappeared Persons, Political Prisoners, and Exiles claimed that in the 12 years of Mexico's two previous governments 455 people had vanished, apparently after being detained. Under de la Madrid's administration, the committee reported, 40 people were inexplicably "detained or disappeared," but all except five were subsequently freed or otherwise accounted for. Yet in recent months numerous political activists have been illegally detained, and some have been added to the committee's missing persons list.

Similarly, in de la Madrid's first year in office, local elections were held under conditions that leftist and rightist politicians agree were perhaps the fairest ever in Mexico. The result was a devastating series of PRI defeats. Since then, the PRI has defrauded the opposition of victories in such major cities as Mexicali, Puebla, and Mazatlán. Piedras Negras was only the latest example of this regression.

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By raising and then dashing expectations, de la Madrid could finish his term presiding over a political system even weaker than the wounded corpus he inherited.

De la Madrid's most publicized attempt to distinguish himself from his predecessors—a "moral renewal" anti-corruption campaign—illustrated his dilemma. For the first time Mexico has adopted statutes banning nepotism and codifying conflict of interest rules. To dramatize its cleanup, the de la Madrid administration is prosecuting Arturo "El Negro" Durazo, the former corrupt Mexico City police chief and childhood friend of Lopez Portillo. But this ritual sacrifice may have backfired.

Durazo, a swarthy bulb-nosed barrel of a man, is now jailed in Los Angeles at Mexico's request, fighting extradition on assorted charges of embezzlement and illegal arms possession. Durazo was appointed in 1976 and amassed a fortune from kickback schemes and police extortion rackets. Using police slave labor and stolen land, he built two ostentatious palaces, one outside Mexico City and the other brazenly dominating the modest skyline of the Pacific beach resort of Zihuatenejo. A smaller Durazo retreat was constructed in a remote mountain locale inaccessible by road; party guests were ferried in by helicopter. The hideaways were decorated in the Late Hellenic Bordello style and appointed with such essentials as bull rings and replicas of Studio 54.

Perhaps because his flamboyance and indiscretion were atypical of the ruling elite, Durazo has emerged as a kind of folk antihero. Tales of his thuggery and graft titillate the public and seem to confirm everyone's worst suspicions about Mexico's leadership. A sensational but reputedly accurate account of Durazo's exploits, *Lo Negro del Negro Durazo* ("What Was Black About 'Black' Durazo"), written by a former associate, quickly became Mexico's biggest publishing success in years. The book has spawned a series of comic books recounting true episodes of Durazo's tenure along with his various sexual exploits. Mexican moviemakers are now finishing a film version that is expected to be a box-office smash.

However, instead of dramatizing the difference between the Lopez Portillo and de la Madrid regimes, the lurid details of the Durazo story may well have simply further damaged the PRI. Voters seem more conscious of the continuity of the PRI's governments, and less so of contrasts in presidential personalities. This is discomfiting to de la Madrid's political staff.

IF MORAL renewal is dangerous and clean elections risky, another option available to de la Madrid is democratization within the federal government. Consider the Mexican Congress: though a good forum for thrashing out PRI disputes and a useful platform for opposition spokesmen, it is still a rubber-stamp legislature. The executive's will is never defied. At best, assuming an unprecedented outpouring of antigovernment sentiment and a pristine vote count, the PAN this year might win 40 or 50 of the 300 Chamber seats that are decided by majority vote. Two years ago the PAN captured just one seat through a majority win. (The other 100 deputies are chosen by proportional representation from the ranks of "minority" candidates backed by parties failing to win a majority-vote seat.) In the unlikely though not implausible event that the PAN gains as many as half of those seats, plus an unheard of 50 majority-vote seats, it would succeed only in whittling the PRI's working majority from its present 299 to a still solid 250. So the PAN is really just pleading for admission into the president's governing coalition. Granting more real power to Congress would seem, therefore, to be an attractive alternative way to revitalize Mexican democracy.

Such a transformation would be impossible, however, unless paralleled by the democratization of the PRI. De la Madrid has taken some tentative first steps in that direction, but party candidates for critical posts like congressional seats and governorships are still chosen by *dedazo*—literally, the "fingering" of nominees by a cabal of top party leaders, chief among them the president. The Mexican president is probably the only leader of a major nation with the traditional right to anoint his successor. This "dedocracy," as critics have dubbed it, has made both party and government appendages of an aloof, near-monarchical executive.

Tulio Hernandez, the governor of tiny Tlaxcala state, last month offered a frank account of his own experience with Mexican dedocracy. "I was made a candidate, it must be said, by a *dedazo*," Hernandez said. "Did the people of Tlaxcala elect me? Was I the fairest leader of them all? No, it's not true. . . . [Party leaders] got together and said, well this one is the best, and what do you know! In 24 hours you are the top, *'lo maximo.'* That is the marvelous thing about the PRI—they can make someone popular, even handsome, in just 24 hours!"

The Mexico City governing elite, like most foreign diplomats and academics, tends to compare Mexico with Latin America; seen through that lens, the PRI looks pretty good. But voters in the north and in the more affluent neighborhoods of Mexico City are increasingly judging Mexican democracy by U.S. standards. "People look across the border and they see spectacular public works, they see presidents defeated in elections, and they wonder why we can't have all that here," says one PAN leader.

The PAN is now building a classic two-party system. By courting people with a nonideological desire for more honest and efficient local government, the PAN is attracting support from provincial urban voters akin to that received by the Italian Communists in the sixties. Some analysts argue that the PAN's ascendancy offers the PRI a historic chance to transform itself into a modern social democratic party. "They could say good-bye to the middle class, to the businessmen, and concentrate on their support in labor," says Enrique Krauze. Such a realignment could force the independent left into a tactical alliance with the PRI, arrayed together against the PAN's antistatist, churchgoing minority. But the PRI has evinced no interest in relinquishing its political monopoly. Its unofficial slogan is still *"de todas, todas"*—the PRI plans to win "all of all of them." Dedocracy reigns. □

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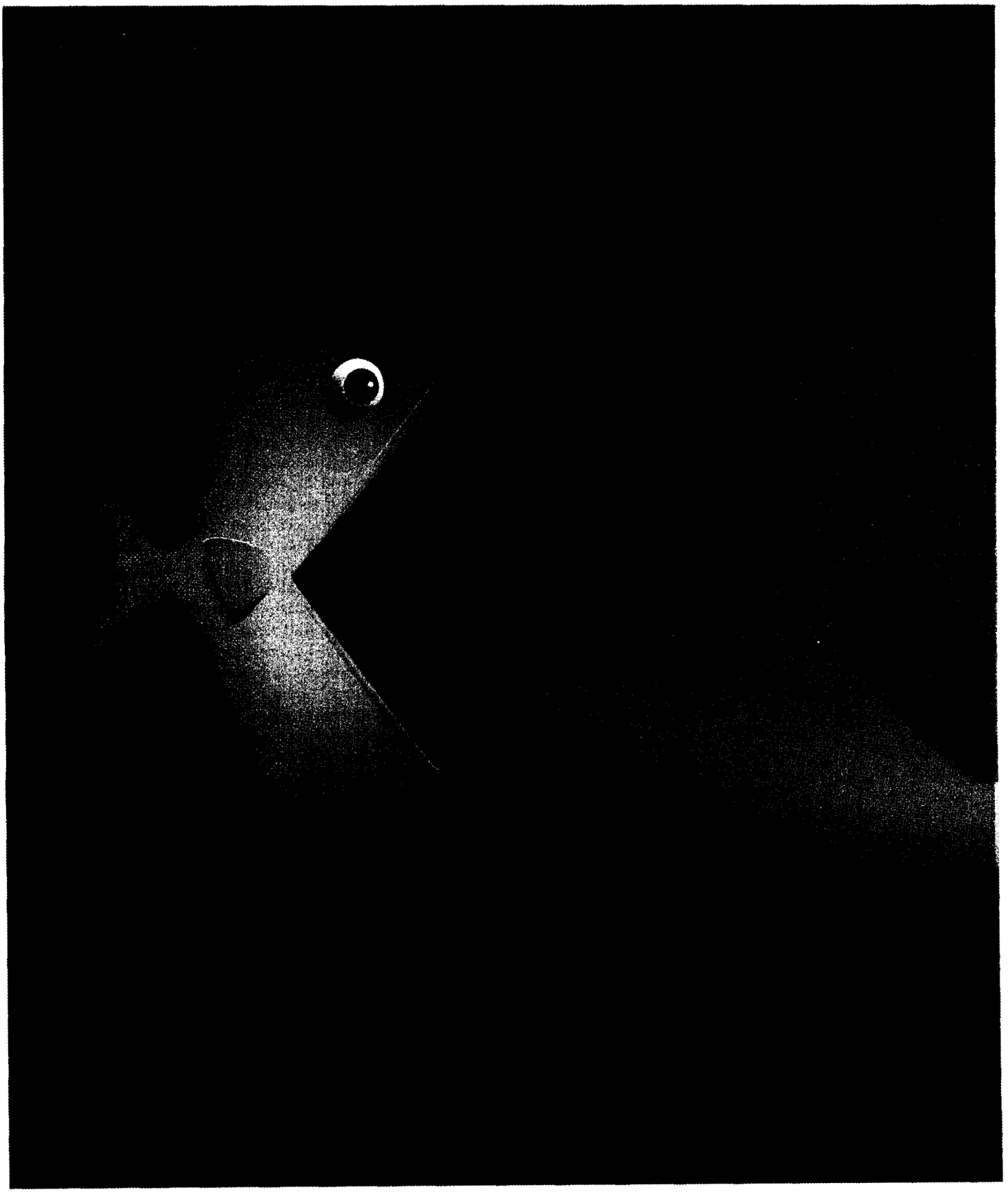

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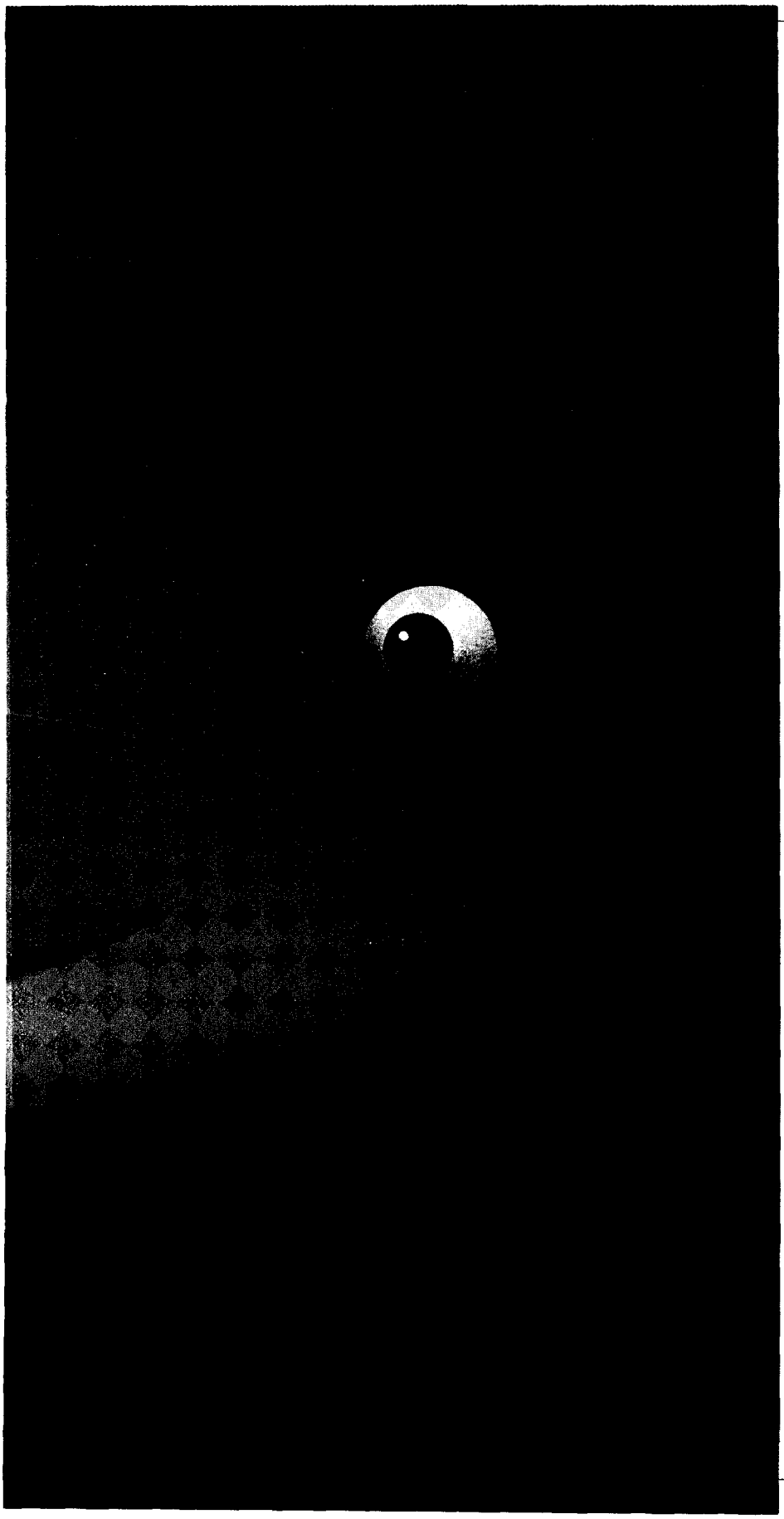

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> ***A handful of companies are rewriting the business school casebooks by using information systems to gain a strategic advantage.***

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Business imperatives have a nasty way of evolving right out from under expensive, just-installed systems.

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Looking to the East

For years I've been reading about Vojtěch Jasný in articles and books on Czechoslovakian film, especially about his last work in his homeland, *All My Good Countrymen*. It was made in 1968 and marked the end in the Czech film world of "liberation." The picture was banned, and Jasný went into the exile where he has since lived. *All My Good Countrymen* won a prize at Cannes in 1969 and has been shown in various places. At last it surfaces in New York—at, of course, the Film Forum. The print is not good; the color is pallid, occasionally a tiny snip is missing. But it's probably the only print, or a copy of the one source, in the West.

All My Good Countrymen

Lily in Love
(New Line)

In 1951 Jasný was one of the early graduates of FAMU, the national film school established after the Second World War. By the time the next, more liberal decade came along, Jasný, born in 1925, was in a position to serve as mentor to the younger generation, including Milos Forman, born in 1932, and Ivan Passer, born 1933. To judge by this Jasný film, the only one I've seen, there's a connection between him and the artifices of Forman, who has just been laureled with an Oscar. But there's also a connection between Jasný and the quiet empathy of Passer, whose *Intimate Lighting* is still my favorite Czech film and who has had a wretched career in the U.S.

All My Good Countrymen is the chronicle of a Moravian village from 1945 to 1957, with an epilogue presumably in 1968. Through the lives of the villagers, it dramatizes the changes brought about by Sovietization, changes that are at first formal and soon become moral. The characters include the church organist, a tailor, some farmers, a lickerish war widow, and a postman, all of whom give us—are intended to give us—the feeling that we have seen them before in comparable villages in other countries. And, as in other films, the weathered faces of real villagers are used for reaction shots.

All the actors seem familiar, too, though I've never previously seen Rodoslav Brozobhaty, sturdy as the farmer who holds out longest for independent life. I have seen Vlastemil Brodsky, the organist who is politically acquiescent. To Brodsky is given the last speech. In the epilogue, the organist, who left the village because of possible danger from independents, returns years later to find resistance virtually quelled. He bicycles away from the village at the end, winding through the lovely countryside, and we hear his voice, this collaborator's voice, daring to hope for his countrymen's future.

Josef Škvorecký's book about the Czech cinema, *All the Bright Young Men and Women*, tells us that Jasný's film was seen by almost a million Czechs during the six months of 1969 that it was permitted to be shown. To be gratified by this fact, from the safety of America, almost smacks of impertinence. To overlook the film's shortcomings would smack of a different impertinence. It suffers, to some degree, from the artiness endemic to the postwar films of Eastern Europe. Examples: into the realistic, the grotesque suddenly intrudes, only to be rationally explained—in this case, the animal masks of a village carnival. A crooked villager dies in his barnyard under a snowfall of goose feathers from geese he presumably got through his thieveries. And the three main sequences are separated by that tireless, tedious symbol, the riderless white horse, which gallops through on its way from one symbolic job to another.

Still, faults and all, the film is a moving elegy. In fact, its faults are part of the elegy, so characteristic are they of the happier decade that this film ended.

Sometimes East and West co-produce a film, not often with scintillating results. Lately Hungary has begun working with the U.S. The first fruit of this union that I saw, which starred the gifted American actor John Savage, was an abomination. The best thing about it is that I can't remember the title. Now comes *Lily in Love*, which is a much more acute embarrassment.

First, there's the script. It's by Frank Cucci, who is unknown to me but who knows the works of Ferenc Molnár. The story is about a New York couple: he's a star actor, she's a hit playwright in whose work he often appears. She has now written a screenplay but doesn't want hubby for the lead. He craves the part; puts on false face and Italian accent to deceive her; wins the role; proceeds to Budapest, where the film is being made; and also wins the wife. The payoff, of course, is that she supposedly knew all the time that he was hubby. If you can imagine Molnár's *The Guardsman* battered to bits with sledgehammers and reassembled by malfunctioning robots, you'll have some idea of this script's sprightliness and grace.

Then there's the director, whom I cringe to name. Károly Makk made the masterwork *Love* (TNR, April 7, 1973), a film whose beauty is almost equaled by the inattention paid it. The little I've

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Camila. Old-fashioned doomed romance, well acted, that happens to be factual. Argentina, 1847, a highborn beauty and a young priest. (Reviewed 4/15/85)

My First Wife. Superb drama of breaking marriage in Melbourne today. John Hargreaves magnificent as the anguished husband, Wendy Hughes sexually true as the cooling wife. Fine direction by Paul Cox. (4/29/85)

The Purple Rose of Cairo. Another sparkling Woody Allen idea looking for a film. A mousy 1930s housewife fantasizes a plummy actor right down off the screen. Yes, but then what? (4/1/85)

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seen of Makk's previous and subsequent work seems to prove that *Love* is the peak of his career, far above his real level, but such things happen. (Think, for instance, of Sam Peckinpah and *The Wild Bunch*.) Still, one ought to be able to write about lesser Makk without ghastly chagrin.

And this isn't the worst of it. The pit is the degradation of two excellent actors, Christopher Plummer and Maggie Smith. To see John Gielgud selling Paul Masson wine or Laurence Olivier selling Polaroids is preferable, if we must make a choice (and it seems that we must), to watching Plummer and Smith befoul themselves for 103 minutes. Plummer, the best Cyrano I've seen, the most electrifying Iago, is one of the true virtuosos among English-speaking actors. Smith, though she has recently been lolling on her talents rather than using them, is a superlative comedienne. I was able to endure her in the recent *A Private Function* because the torpor of that alleged comedy was the director's fault: the script may well have looked funny. The script for *Lily in Love* could never have looked like anything but a free trip to Budapest.

To assume that Plummer and Smith took these parts for money is really to insult the profit motive. Surely if these two actors want, in the instance, to put money ahead of quality, they needn't stoop this far: they have, alas, proved that in the past. They must know, and obviously don't care, what they do to admirers of their art—a quite apt term—who have to watch them offending not only our intelligences but their own.

Their agent is played by Adolph Green, of the Comden and Green team. I'll put this as continently as possible: Green shows no iota of a reason for his being in any film at all, even this one.

How real is the general education revival?

CURRICULUM COMMOTION

BY ANN HULBERT

AMERICA'S educational crisis has graduated from high school. After a year of alarm over the state of secondary schools, higher education is taking its turn in the headlines. The baccalaureate degree is in dire straits, according to three reports that have appeared since the fall, one from William J. Bennett, then chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, one sponsored by the National Institute of Education, and one by the Association of American Colleges. In that order, the pamphlets get progressively less realistic and more rhetorical about the fate and shape of liberal education. Curriculum reform, it emerges, is the key to saving civilization. "In the end," intones the last report, "the quality of American life is at stake, the wisdom of our leaders, our ability as citizens to make informed choices, and the dedication with which we exhibit humane and democratic values as we go about our daily lives."

High stakes, in short. Yet yet within six months the emergency has apparently come and gone. "Wave Of Curricular Change Sweeping American Colleges," *The New York Times* recently reported. The American Council on Education announced that "higher education has gotten out of the negative stage, of just feeling beleaguered." The facts, too have miraculously turned around. In the fall, the council's preliminary findings from a 1984-85 survey were concrete and depressing: students can graduate from close to three-quarters of colleges and universities without having studied American history and literature or European history, and from almost 90 percent of them without knowing anything about Greece or Rome.

To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education by William J. Bennett (National Endowment for the Humanities)

Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education (National Institute of Education)

Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community (Association of American Colleges)

As spring approached, the statistics suddenly became less specific but much brighter: three-quarters of colleges and universities say they have general education requirements, nearly six in ten are reviewing their curricula, three in ten already have. It looks like an incredible recovery, and the recent pamphlets seem poised to take some of the credit. "Even though at first blush it may appear to be an exaggeration to say so," write the authors of the most florid report so far, the Association of American Colleges' *Integrity in the College Curriculum*, "the recent critiques and analyses of American education are as vital to clarifying our condition as were the pamphlets of Tom Paine before the American Revolution and the speeches of Abraham Lincoln on the eve of the Civil War."

The critiques of the undergraduate curriculum do clarify our condition. But what they reveal is how confused and contradictory most of the claims about general education are. No revolution or civil war in higher education is afoot, and the curriculum reforms and reviews may well be less substantive than they sound; in fact, that's the only way to explain the contradictory numbers. "General education" requirements must be broadly defined indeed if three-quarters of all colleges can say they have them on the books at the same time that three-quarters give diplomas to students who have never studied the ancients, or American literature. This flurry may only amount to a public relations campaign on the part of institutions whose costs are rising steadily while their enrollments are leveling off. They're spreading the message that schools are agonizing over their product—working to "redefine our concept of what constitutes an educated person," as the president of Skidmore College told the *Times*. It's a message that is very popular with the press and the public, as the high school commotion proved.

The message was in fact popular long before that, and the history of general education enthusiasms suggests the current confusion isn't anything new. In the two previous waves of interest in revising college curriculum requirements, after the first and second world wars, general education was touted as the cure for what ailed society—

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political corruption, communism, always vocationalism, and above all social fragmentation. The specific recommendations were as diffuse as those in this season's reports. General education talk, and tinkering, were high priorities until more pressing events and hard-nosed considerations intruded. The Depression and Sputnik, and then the Vietnam War, put well-roundedness and a common background in Western culture second to job skills, technological know-how, and "relevance." All along, of course, natural inclinations also worked against a scheme actually designed to lay a common ground of discourse. Teachers, pleading the impossible diversity of knowledge, have long been eager to avoid venturing too far beyond their own bailiwicks, and they've gotten more reclusive as their specialties have narrowed. Students, proclaiming the impossible diversity of their interests, have generally resisted sitting down with difficult books.

Two basic positions have emerged from the ever shifting debate over the proper shape and purpose of general education. Advocates of a curriculum based on great books, among whom Robert Hutchins at the University of Chicago is perhaps the best known, prevailed early on. They generally favored a thematic or survey approach and necessarily emphasized Western civilization. "Shared knowledge and values," the often invoked ideals of general education, meant something quite concrete: students were to share the common challenge of making their way through a selection—inevitably incomplete—of important, influential texts.

AN ALTERNATE approach, based on "modes of inquiry" rather than specific books and subject matter, has become more popular as time passes. It aims to introduce students to the "how" of knowledge, leaving the particular "what" to professors' discretion. This is how Harvard University, whose seven-year-old Core Curriculum has probably done most to popularize the approach, described its goals: "to encourage a critical appreciation of the major approaches to knowledge, so that students may acquire an understanding of what kinds of knowledge exist in certain important areas, how such knowledge is created, how it is used, and what it might mean to them personally." The modes of inquiry method has often meant a choice among narrowly focused courses, rather than required surveys. (A course called Disease and History: the U.S. and the Conquest of the White Plague, 1842-1942, for example, can satisfy one-half of Harvard's "historical study" requirement.) And by prescribing broad skills—critical thinking, moral reasoning, cross-cultural perspectives, and so on—rather than specific content, it has conveniently skirted charges of Western "parochialism," commonly leveled during the sixties and seventies. The pedagogical benefits of the method are open to question, but the practical—and political—advantages have prevailed. Professors have welcomed the chance to spice up their narrow specialties with a dash of self-conscious talk about their approach to knowledge, how it is created, etc.—rather than serve up a stew of classics they only dimly remember and students might resist.

TWO OF the most impressive arguments—Harvard's *General Education in a Free Society* of 1945, better known as the "Redbook," and Daniel Bell's *The Reforming of General Education*, written for Columbia University in 1965—showed, from different perspectives, that the formal and textual approaches to general education shouldn't be so starkly separated. Bell essentially made the case for modifying Columbia's conception of general education, which had been shaped around its Humanities and Contemporary Civilization courses since World War I, by adding an emphasis on modes of inquiry. The Harvard committee urged two great books courses, Great Texts of Literature and Western Thought and Institutions, as part of its larger distribution scheme.

The strength of both reports was their rigorous analysis and synthesis of the basic questions raised in every general education revival: Should a core curriculum emphasize concerns of the past or problems of the present? Should it be based on academic disciplines, or shaped around interdisciplinary themes? Should it emphasize depth or breadth? They suggested elaborate strategies to fine-tune the balance—outlining particular distributions and sequences. But they also stuck to a simple tactic to assure a basic balance—insisting, in the Redbook's words, that "the books . . . which have been the great meeting points and have most influenced the men who in turn have influenced others are those we can least afford to neglect, if ways can be found of opening better access to them."

That standard, as they showed, needn't be a monumental and pompous one. Indeed, keeping great books foremost in mind ought to be a minimal and practical guide. All the rhetoric about shaping cultured citizens and reviving humanistic traditions distorts the real, much less grandiose issue at stake: the purpose of general education is not to set the direction of culture but to orient students in their college education. Modes of inquiry proponents overlook the best, and most basic, way of reaching their goal: some firsthand familiarity with the ordeal of plain rigorous reading of important books will serve a student better than passing acquaintance with the "mode" of, say, moral reasoning. Studying major texts means confronting basic questions, as well as ideas and truths, and most often a combination of all three; it involves linking the thoughts of the past with those of the present; it requires venturing across disciplinary boundaries but not without a map in hand.

Of course great teachers help bring great books to life; but even in the hands of mediocre professors, such books are arguably more instructive than the introductory schemes those professors are likely to carve out of their own specialties. Above all, some selection of books makes practical sense if the aim, as everyone proclaims, is to provide students with a solid ground of common discourse in a relatively brief time (enrollments at two-year colleges are rising, while four-year institutions are expected to shrink). Students' samplings from assorted modes of inquiry courses simply aren't likely to overlap in any but the most abstract sense. A sequence of core books, however, will enable teachers and students to refer to the same foundations as college unfolds; years later, when memories are fuzzy, those books still serve, however hazily, as basic reference points—and what more do we really expect?

BUT the current reports show how much resistance this minimal case faces. Taken together, the three pamphlets—*To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education* by William J. Bennett, the National Institute of Education's *Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education*, and the Association of

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American Colleges' *Integrity in the College Curriculum*—are a map of the current confusion. Each report takes us nearer the scene of the curriculum crisis, and further from a clearheaded assessment of it. Bennett, who was chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities when his report appeared, stands outside the academy and usefully asserts the importance of classics in the best pamphlet of the lot. The NIE represents the bureaucracy above higher education, and is far more interested in institutional structures than in syllabi. The AAC, a professional organization of faculty and administrators at the heart of the academy, presents a muddled plea for a modes of inquiry approach.

IN 32 straightforward pages Bennett makes a point of writing in the first person, and of reaching out to include the public in his enterprise. He argues plainly rather than politically, doubtless aware that his affiliations—and his rather old-fashioned pitch—invite accusations of conservatism. His is a traditional call for restoring great books to the core curriculum, on the practical grounds that they've been eclipsed as the focus has "changed from knowledge to 'inquiry,' from content to 'skills' " since the late sixties and early seventies. He also urges original texts on the principled grounds that the best works in the humanities "tell us how men and women of our own and other civilizations have grappled with life's enduring fundamental questions: What is justice? What should be loved? What deserves to be defended? What is courage? What is noble? What is base? Why do civilizations flourish? Why do they decline?" Though Bennett emphasizes that "syllabi should not be set in stone," a survey of public opinion confirms his hunch that "there is more consensus on what the important books are than many people have been willing to admit." (Shakespeare's plays, American historical documents, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and the Bible showed up on over half of the lists he was sent.) He rounds out his scheme by recommending familiarity with one non-Western culture, a foreign language, and the history of science and technology.

Bennett's visible campaign to become secretary of education might easily have politicized his report, but the response to it was surprisingly unpartisan. The NEH amassed a pile of press clippings the size of a telephone book, in which columnists on the right and left, editorialists, and letters to the editor applauded the report. The few dissenting voices, mostly from the academy, objected that Bennett rather piously implies that there is a fixed canon. Yet these reservations couldn't help but seem impractically purist next to Bennett's call to "help students confront great texts, great minds, and great ideas," which sounded more like a commonsensical summons than a catechism.

There was no mention of those great things, however, in the NIE's *Involvement in Learning*. The study group appointed by the director of the NIE and reporting to then secretary of education T. H. Bell was composed of seven people who might be classified as meta-academics—interested above all in educational administration, management, and research. Their report, guided by "the knowledge base, the results of research," reads like an ill-written management consultant's report. It contains 27 recommendations for improving three "critical conditions of excellence"—student involvement, high expectations, and "assessment and feedback." Few amount to more than abstract banalities dressed up in managementese ("frontloading," "inputs," "outputs," "learning technologies," etc.). As for general education, supposedly so central, two recommendations set standards that are both empty and expensive: "Faculties and chief academic officers in each institution should agree upon and disseminate a statement of the knowledge, capacities, and skills that students must develop prior to graduation," says recommendation number eight. Yet without even describing those capacities, the report hurries on to say it may take some students an extra year to master them. And though the skills aren't nameable, they're measurable; the study group urges proficiency examinations to provide a "warranty" on the degree awarded.

At the press conference announcing the report, Secretary Bell said he hoped it would "generate debate, rebuttal, and new ideas," and he got applause. His assistant secretary for postsecondary education was given a T-shirt emblazoned with "Involvment in Learning," according to *The New York Times*. There were laughs at the missing letter, but so far no debate about the words

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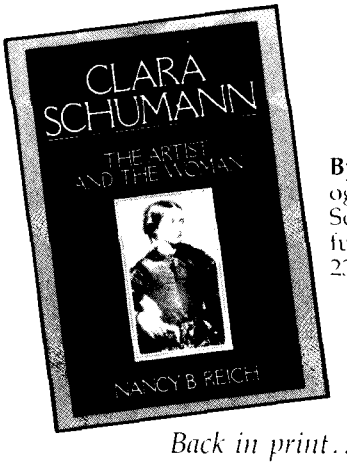

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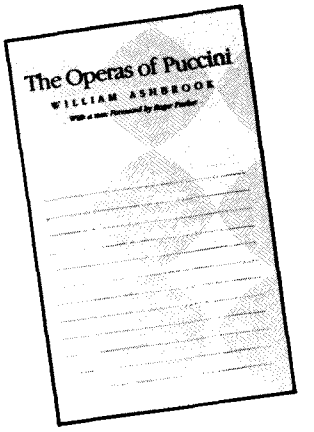

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and ideas missing from the report, and no rebuttal of the mechanistic, inarticulate suggestions it did contain.

But there are always new ideas to add. In February the AAC weighed in with *Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community*. The 19 who served on the select committee in charge of the Project on Redefining the Meaning and Purpose of Baccalaureate Degrees, which began in January 1982, were equally split between administrators and professors (two of physics, the rest in the humanities). Of the three pamphlets, this one is the closest to an inside look at what might go on in college curriculum committees.

"The problem with the American college curriculum is not that it has failed to offer up knowledge," the authors say, directly contradicting Bennett. "The problem is that it offers too much knowledge with too little attention to how that knowledge has been created and what methods and styles of inquiry have led to its creation." In lush prose they urge an elaborate, and totally abstract, modes of inquiry approach. Far from calling to mind Paine or Lincoln, whom the select committee invokes at the outset, their suggestions read like *The Joy of Knowledge*, all style and no substance. The authors prescribe nine "experiences" as essential to the kind of "education that will enable the American people to live responsibly and joyfully, fulfilling their promise as individual humans and their obligations as democratic citizens."

First they recommend "inquiry, abstract logical thinking, critical analysis," which involve the sensuous exercise of subjecting "inert data to the probing analysis of the mind." Then comes "literacy," a "heavy word" they do little to lighten. As for number three, "understanding numerical data," they advise that numbers "are as alive as we are when they greet us and we greet them." Then follow "historical consciousness," "science," "values," "art," "international and multicultural experiences," and finally "study in depth." All of these are guaranteed to "turn the baccalaureate experience around, to make it an opportunity for a student to establish a style and a certain kind of bravery in the presence of the uncertain and the unknown—that is the sort of event that colleges should be all about."

"Notice, there are no pictures, graphs, or charts. This report is meant to be *read* by thinking people," one member of the select committee said proudly as the report was unveiled to the press. Never mind how many people have in fact read it; the real question is how clearly some people were thinking when they wrote it. Two of the committee members also served in William Bennett's study group. It's hard to see how they could endorse both reports, since the AAC's cure for what ails the curriculum, vague as it is, represents a fundamentally different approach from Bennett's. It looks like a compendium of the academic abstractions that Bennett tried to counter with concrete common sense.

THIS third postwar muddle over core curricula is particularly disappointing because now might actually be an opportune moment to mix hard-nosed calculations and humanistic aspirations—precisely because what's behind the commotion is not just a vague sense of civic crisis but a financial crunch. Professors, who have long been the major obstacle to a serious core curriculum, are newly vulnerable as suppliers in a buyer's market. Indeed, all the reports are unexpectedly tough on them, lecturing them about paying more attention to students and less to selfish research and departmental politics. As for students, they are now hard-pressed consumers; college is increasingly a financial ordeal, and the reception of Bennett's report suggests that they and their parents may well be ready for an intellectual ordeal in return. That is the essence of the true initiation into a common core of culture, Lionel Trilling remarked in his essay "The Uncertain Future of the Humanistic Educational Ideal"—as he lamented its loss to a shallower ideal of sharing. "If I am right in saying that humanistic educational traditions of the past were grounded in strenuous effort and that the idea of ordeal was essential to them," he wrote, "it will be obvious, I think, that our American culture will not find those educational traditions congenial." Perhaps the most characteristic American way to make such puritanical attitudes seem more congenial is to put a big price tag on them—and that's happening for other reasons. The strenuous effort with the best texts needn't be elitist. Nor is it all drab diligence and submission, as the Redbook eloquently explained in summing up its case for great books:

> Some doubt may be felt whether the heights of these books may not be beyond the reach of large masses of the students. But they have always been admittedly beyond the reach of the vast majority of even their best readers. That has not made them less educative. And indeed the chief reason for the course, and the best argument for experimenting with it, is that too many students today have too little contact with thoughts that are beyond them (apart from the specialties) and that many are in fact passionately if inarticulately hungry for greatness in the common cares of man.

AGHAST at the disarray and incoherence in today's undergraduate education, everyone seems to ignore the disarray and incoherence in the proposed solutions. As long as there's a "Wave of Curriculum Change Sweeping American Colleges," no one looks too closely at what gets swept in or out. This is not to suggest that a lot of academic bickering about competing proposals and philosophies would be preferable to the current enthusiasm for all pamphlets. Nor are all the changes on campuses vacuous. Brooklyn College,

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to take a popular example, is showing that the "hunger" the Redbook identified can be a very practical guide to reform. The college has introduced a required sequence of ten core courses, many based on original texts. The curriculum is praised by faculty, administrators, and students (many of them recent immigrants with mainly vocational interests), who credit it with creating a sense of intellectual community. But to judge by the confusion of the recent reports, no one should have high hope that most students will soon be graduating with sharper critical thinking and writing skills, with shared knowledge and values, or, least of all, with that hunger even partly satisfied.

DEMOCRACY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Grave New World: The Superpower Crisis of the 1980s by Michael Ledeen

(Oxford University Press, 244 pp., $17.95)

The question of the relative strengths and weaknesses of democratic and totalitarian regimes has resurfaced as a prominent subject recently. It is a topical debate best followed, as historians would remind us, not in great works of theory, but in the lesser productions of those closer to politics and the making of policy—those in which the spirit of the author does not overwhelm the spirit of the age. It is in this sense that *Grave New World* is a valuable book. For the puzzled contemporary, as for the historian, this is a fine introduction to that part of an American ideological shift generally (but unhelpfully) known as neoconservatism, a worldview as vague as it is passionate, and as ill-defined as it is influential. As such, for all the book's faults, it has great symptomatic value.

Michael Ledeen, a political analyst who has written seriously on subjects as diverse as Italian culture and Iranian revolution, thinks America should have better people making a better foreign policy. On the face of it, it's hard to disagree. But most of his specific arguments—about which people, what policy, and why—seem confused and inadequate. Mr. Ledeen suggests that the world has become a more dangerous place in the last decade because the two superpowers' grip on it has weakened. Gone is the "apparent American/Soviet condominium of the 1970s," which "acted as a restraining influence on international adventurism." The adjective "apparent" suggests doubts that require more serious elaboration. Mr. Ledeen argues that the two superpowers' grip has loosened because they each face a crisis: the Soviet Union, a profound structural crisis of its whole system, the United States, a crisis in the way its foreign policy is made. This is already dubious. The two crises cannot seriously be compared—or paired—as causes of global uncertainty; the Soviet dilemma is dramatically more fundamental, complex, and fateful. To say that the peace of the world is gravely threatened by both is like saying that a man's health is gravely threatened by two illnesses: terminal cancer and a nagging cold.

Mr. Ledeen devotes less than a quarter of his book (just 50 pages) to analyzing the Soviet cancer; anyway he would have been better advised to confine himself to his main subject—America's nagging cold. For his Sovietological diagnosis is as unoriginal and unbalanced as it is knowing and opinionated. His is the voice of the eternal conference-goer. "To be sure," Mr. Ledeen writes, "the Soviet leaders themselves still believe in communism . . ." How can he be sure? Where's his evidence? Later: "I believe that Chernenko is well aware of the internal failure of communism. . . ." Now, if this came from a top-level Soviet defector, from someone who had worked with the Soviet leader, it would be interesting. But why should we care what Mr. Ledeen believes that Mr. Chernenko believes (or, rather, believed)?

Instead of probing Soviet obsessions in this chapter, Mr. Ledeen seems more interested in displaying his own, which are of a characteristic neoconservative

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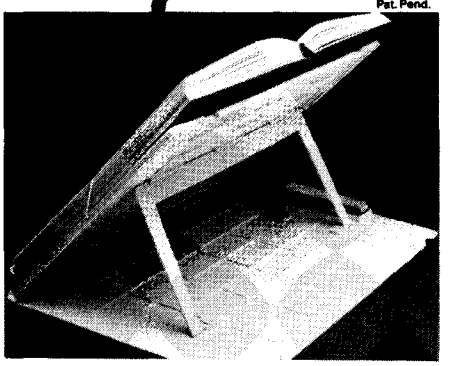

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kind: technology transfer, espionage, subversion, terrorism. Well, I have no doubt that the Soviet Union is behind a lot more of the dirty work in the world than many people in the West like to believe. Whatever the truth about Soviet and Bulgarian involvement in the attempt to assassinate the pope, for example, Western reluctance even to admit the possibility was surely simply naive. But what importance do we attach to these aspects of Soviet behavior in our total analysis of the Soviet crisis? That is the question. It seems absurd for Mr. Ledeen to devote 16 of his 50 pages to a sensational account, apparently based on one defector's testimony, of Rumanian technological espionage. (Look where it has got them!)

WHEN HE addresses a subject of real importance to the future of the Soviet empire—the Polish crisis, for example—Mr. Ledeen's touch is very uncertain. Thus he describes the ZOMO riot police as "an elite corps of ruthless toughs roughly equivalent to the Gestapo under Hitler." Wrong. If there is an equivalent to the Gestapo, it is the Security Service (SB), from which the killers of Father Popieluszko came. "The Polish case cannot possibly be unique; the workers in other countries of the Soviet Empire have undoubtedly created their own Solidarities. . . ." Absolute poppycock. "The consequences of Soviet indecision in Poland are manifold," he writes, starting with "the collapse of the Polish Communist party." But what "decisive" Soviet action could have saved the party from collapse? Invasion? Nothing would have been better calculated to complete the party's self-destruction.

"Paradoxically," he suggests, "the failure of the Soviet Union to act decisively in Poland may threaten world peace more than would an effective military repression of the Poles," because that failure contributes to "instability" in Eastern Europe. But a few pages later, while discussing authoritarian regimes friendly to the United States ("friendly tyrants"), he suggests that the United States must work for democratization because "repressive regimes are all potentially explosive and, thus, threaten international peace (a problem that is particularly acute with regard to the Soviet Empire)." These two views are diametrically opposed. Thus Mr. Ledeen has it both ways (or, rather, neither way) on a question fundamental to our whole analysis of the declining Soviet empire.

MR. LEDEEN'S discussion of American foreign policy is longer and more cogent. He makes some telling criticisms of the Carter administration's handling of the Iranian crisis (not the most difficult target), and an interesting point about the lack of emphatic American support for Spain's remarkable transition from dictatorship to democracy. Still, his larger argument here also seems to be flawed by an unresolved contradiction.

On the one hand, he argues that the United States should be more realistic and *realpolitisch* in the pursuit of its own national interests. In Central America, for example, the United States should not be constrained by what Mr. Ledeen identifies as a prevailing American vice: "abstract moralism." Indeed, it should get over its "Vietnam syndrome" and be prepared once again to use American fighting men "to support and advance our diplomatic objectives." American leaders should listen to "true experts" rather than to "the hue and cry from below," for "public opinion is always poorly informed on serious policy matters." In short, the United States should behave more like the Soviet Union.

On the other hand, his "own preference is for a relatively aggressive policy in support of the democratic revolution throughout the world." But this "democratic revolution," if taken seriously, gets your "true expert" and proponent of realpolitik into a bundle of contradictions. For a start, since Mr. Ledeen also asserts that "peace between the superpowers is impossible unless one or both abandon their revolutionary view of their role in history," the implication must be either that Soviet leaders will abandon their dream of world revolution—in which, however, Mr. Ledeen believes they believe—or that Mr. Ledeen is prepared for American foreign policy to lead us into war. Moreover, what happens when the "democratic revolution" brings to power a government hostile to the United States, in place of a "friendly tyrant"? This is another fundamental question that Mr. Ledeen does not directly address. Instead, he seems silently to include "friendly to the United States" in his root definition of what it is to be democratic.

That this becomes a very odd definition of democracy may be gathered from his reference to "the democratic revolution in 1979" in El Salvador. In 1980, he explains, "Duarte and his colleagues promised constitutional reform, democratic elections, and a continuation of the redistribution program. All these promises were maintained. . . ." The choice of the word "maintained" rather than "kept" is odd, but it is also rather apt, for what Duarte certainly did was to go on repeating the promises, while in practice the land distribution program, to take only one example, was stalled after the first phase. To suggest that El Salvador after 1980 was a "democracy" is to set the standard for democracy rather low. We are here close to that well-known set of radical equations: a democratic regime is one that is friendly to the United States, and one hostile to the United States is a totalitarian regime.

As for policy: "the security of the developing country needs to be supported through the destabilizing transition to democracy. We need to tell the leaders of such countries that their long-term security depends on their willingness to liberalize. . . ." But if "their long-term security" means their remaining in power, and if "liberalization" means real progress toward democracy, and not just dictatorship with a human face, then we would be telling those leaders a lie. Because, in the long term, democracy deposes dictators. Otherwise it is not democracy. So Mr. Ledeen, like the West German advocates of détente as an instrument for change in the Soviet bloc, simply does not face up to this ultimate dilemma. How do you work against dictators by working with them?

THERE IS a domestic dilemma, moreover, in Mr. Ledeen's claims for democracy. Wearing his realpolitik cap, he deplores the disruptive influence of public opinion, with its "abstract moralism," led astray by a left-dominated media, aided and abetted by lawyers, and so on. He deplores "the hue and cry from below." But "hue and cry from below" is exactly what you tend to get if you have a "democratic revolution." The basic disruptive influence is—democracy itself. This is the final nettle that Mr. Ledeen fails to grasp. The point was admirably made by Edward Crankshaw, more than 30 years ago, when he observed that

> while the Government of the Soviet Union continues the old tradition of cynical and amoral behaviour in the international are-

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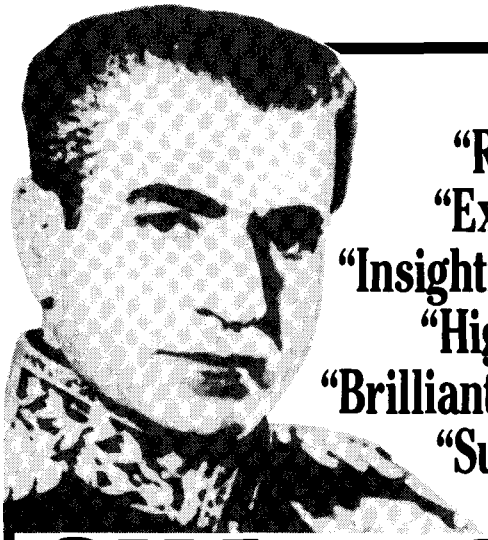
na, the chief Governments opposed to it are painfully, convulsively, and in deference to the popular will, engaged in renouncing the unquestioned prerogative of all governments in the history of the world—that is to say the freedom to work with cynicism and perfect lack of scruple in what they conceive to be the interests of their country.

Obviously this may give the Soviet Union some advantages in the short term. But what about in the medium to the long term?

HERE I find myself in a curious role reversal with Mr. Ledeen. He, an American, takes the part of the world-wise, world-weary European looking with dismay at America's naive moralistic blundering. He has spent some time in Italy, he tells us: "The country of Machiavelli is a fine university for those who wish to see the world stripped of moralistic sentimentality, and there is a good deal of Italian realism in some of my claims." I, a European, look with hope, and even with confidence, at what I take to be a great novel enterprise in the history of mankind: that of attempting to make a *democratic* foreign policy. Indeed, I think that the great advantages of democracy, its self-correcting mechanisms, its checks and its balances, its capacity for voluntary mobilization (so vastly superior to the compulsory kind), have all been demonstrated over the last two decades.

In fact, one fine illustration is provided by the collected papers of the Committee on the Present Danger, recently published under the title *Alerting America* (Pergamon-Brassey). These are no doubt a valuable source for students of nuclear strategy (of which I am not one). For me the most riveting and significant part of the whole weighty tome is a discreet list, in small print, of "members of the board of directors of the Committee on the Present Danger appointed to the Reagan administration." It has 59 names.

Here, in the mid-seventies, was a military-political challenge that arose precisely out of the advantage of the old-fashioned cynical, amoral Soviet Union, which was stealing ahead in the strategic arms race under the cloak of détente (and "condominium"). But here, too, was the response, arising in a way possible only in a democracy (the free association of experts and concerned citizens from diverse fields and parties), and converted into govern-



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ment policy in a way possible only in a democracy.

Now where is the Soviet Committee on the Present Danger discussing, with the same urgency, openness, and free association of talents, the profound economic crisis of the Soviet Union? Bottled up in frustrated intellectuals and in marginal institutes. Where is the new administration to implement those proposals? Well, we may all be proved wrong, when Mr. Gorbachev turns out to be—as one British M.P. recently enthused—a Soviet John F. Kennedy. But I am happy for once to agree with Mr. Ledeen that this is highly improbable, because of the nature of the system. "Moralistic sentimentality" aside, democracy does still have some advantages. I cannot follow him, however, in the bald assertion that the current Soviet combination of military strength and internal weakness makes the Soviet Union "the most dangerous of all adversaries." Why is it more dangerous than a Soviet Union that is both militarily *and* economically strong? He suggests this rapid internal decline increases the danger of an "explosion," of the bear striking out wildly abroad. But I do not think the external consequences of the slow decline of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, for example, necessarily support the proposition that empires which decline fast are more dangerous than empires which decline slowly.

Finally, Mr. Ledeen's argument that the United States lacks a competent and imaginative foreign policy elite seems to be flatly contradicted by his page of acknowledgments—the most extraordinary I have ever read. If Alexander Haig was the "vicar" of American foreign policy, Mr. Ledeen here appears in the character of Trollope's unctuous chaplain, Mr. Slope. He thanks, among others, "the Honorable Richard Perle, whose strength of character, quality of intellect and moral tenacity have been so inspiring . . . the Honorable Robert C. McFarlane, who . . . showed me the meaning of intellectual courage . . . General Vernon Walters, one of the great personages of our time . . . the Honorable Jeane Kirkpatrick, whose clarity of thought and political courage are so well blended with her personal warmth and breadth of human understanding . . . Midge Decter, who has somehow combined the talents of an extraordinary leader with those of the selfless colleague . . ." Nay, surely is title is wrong. O brave new world, that has such people in't! With "true experts" like this, who needs democracy?

TIMOTHY GARTON ASH

Timothy Garton Ash is foreign editor of *The Spectator* and author of *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (Scribners).

MATERIAL BOY

Money: A Suicide Note by Martin Amis

(Viking, 370 pp., $16.95)

"Money cannot bring happiness," Freud said, "because happiness is the fulfillment of infantile wishes and money is not the object of infantile wishes." Jonathan Self, the manic-depressive voice in Martin Amis's first-rate new novel, hasn't realized this, but he's gotten rich making TV ads. His mother is dead. He's illegitimate. His search for legitimacy in the world is a quest that leads him not into self-awareness but into Hollywood, where he hopes to direct an autobiographical movie that will make his compulsiveness glorious. The movie is to be called *Good Money;* and Self's frenetic torment is based on his use of money as a defense. "Money is my bodyguard," he says. But it protects him from nothing. In fact, like most defenses, his arises from vulnerability. He is a conglomerate of terrors and a parody of the economic model he admires.

Self's monologue is itself an attempt to talk for victory, a manic performance that tries to deny his state of collapse even while admitting it. He speaks of willpower ("to strive, to seek, to butch it out—it's all a question of willpower"), but he completely lacks it. He is a gourmand of contemporary addictions: pornography, junk food, liquor, TV, space games. He lives at a ferocious pace, but his speed is panic, not action. "Ever since I gave up my job and started waiting for the film to happen, I too have felt the gap between things." Self is passive. He rolls with every compromise. The jazzy aggression of his gab compensates for the impotence of his actions. "Things happen to me," he says, without the confidence to impose order on his life. He boasts of brazening it out with fear ("OK, hard-on. No more of this"), but he is completely controlled by fear. He believes in violence and in the principle of force ("Hit them with everything. No quarter"), but he is pushed around by anonymous cab drivers, bartenders, by his gold-digging London girlfriend Selina, and especially by the smooth and superconfident producer Fielding Goodney. It's Goodney who understands that wealth, which Self sees as his greatest strength, is his greatest weakness. "Keep a fix on the addictive industries: you can't lose," he tells Self, spellbinding him with the promise of money that only compounds his failure. Goodney drives a limo called The Autocrat; Self's sports car is called Fiasco.

Money has made Self big. He's five foot ten and weighs 225 pounds. But he is living proof that size does not mean strength. His rapacity has made him a stranger to himself and to the world. Self's body incarnates this alienation. He has a mouth full of bad teeth that, like him, are dead but still viable. His stomach sprawls around him like a boom town. His ears ring. "I feel invaded," he says, and he has been taken over. His head is filled with the babble of the tyrannical will: the voices of money and pornography ("*suck and spread, bitch. Yeah, bounce for me baby . . .*"). But he hears the opposing voice of conscience that he tries to numb with action and anodynes, the voice that asks: "I'm in hell, but why is it hell?"

Self doesn't know any answers. But instead of analyzing the long-term problem, he buys short-term relief. In one manic moment, he thinks he needs a jolt of stress and confides, "I think I'll try stress. Where can you buy some?" Self has been brainwashed by the marketplace, and he spouts the bogus notion of admen that happiness is the absence of pain through the consumption of products:

> Happiness is the relief of pain, they say, and so I guess I'm a pretty happy guy. The

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relief of pain happens to me pretty frequently. But then so does pain. That's why I get lots of that relief they talk about, and all that happiness.

Health is knowing you can survive pain, which is an inevitable part of being alive. But Self's identity is so weak, his spiritual center so nebulous, that he grasps at any flaw. His high purchasing power substitutes for low moral energy. He lurches from one event to another in pursuit of instant gratification. "All shopped out, I bought four drinks and three strippers, nine bottles of champagne in a topless bar on Broadway. I considered cabbing out to Atlantic City and dropping some dough at roulette. I have the perfect system. It always fails." Self makes an epic of his self-destructiveness, preferring to cling to habits that are killing him than risk change. "I do mean Self to be a consumer," Amis has said. "He is consumed with consumerism."

IN MANIC moods, when his development deal seems to be happening, Self has moments of euphoric grandeur: "I feel fine, I feel formidable, I feel almost adult. I am not just a passenger—I am one of life's pilots." But since his life is out of control, his usual estimation of himself is low. He refers to himself variously as a dog, a cretin, junk. Anyone, like the cultured Martina Twain in New York, who shows genuine interest in Self is immediately suspect: "a sicko who saw nothing in me but myself." Self-hatred is built into the masochistic sexual games he and Selina play (she excites him with tales of other lovers), and in his penchant for "self-abuse."

Self is so terrified of the world that the only way he can cope is through domination. "The first thing I wonder about a woman is: will I fuck it? Similarly, the first thing I wonder about a man is: will I fight it?" Hatred is part of the predatory competitive posture with which he faces life. Sympathy, trust, loyalty, compassion, commitment are not, Self claims, what he has to offer, or what he feels he deserves. "I want. Me for me," he says, leering at a passing girl. Money only magnifies the sin of his separation. He enacts "the thrilling brutality of money" by making his sense of ugliness sensational: a projection which rejects the world that he feels rejects him.

As a rule I hate people who are the beneficiaries of a university education. I hate people with degrees, O-levels, eleven plusses, Iowa Tests, shorthand diplomas . . . And you hate me, don't you. Yes you do. Because I'm the new kind, the kind who has money but can never use it for anything but ugliness . . .

INEVITABLY, Self is drawn to Hollywood ("land of my dreams and my longing"), where vindictiveness is dramatized as triumph and compulsiveness as drive. In this world of hustlers, Self's destructiveness passes for normal behavior. Self-involvement is the sine qua non of stardom, and Self's megalomania is matched by the actors he woos for his script. Amis's Hollywood is an attitude of mind that includes New York and represents the collective addiction: a community run by moral defectives that sells society its sickness instead of the antidote.

Goodney spells out the philosophy of conspicuous waste to Self, telling him to forget European frugality and start living American abundance: "Go buy a case of champagne and pour it on your dick. Spend. Spend. You're of no use to me when you fly coach. Fly supersonic. Fly sharp-end, Slick. Fly right." In an industry that respects only the numbers, there is no odium in failing as long as it's *big*. So actors must demand huge fees as a sign of career status and to keep their asking price high for future films. And directors must juggle development deals irrespective of quality in order to pay for their cars and their shrinks and their beach houses. It's a demented fiscal shell game that wastes lives as well as cash. Self, like all the others, goes through the manic Hollywood motions, racing to make a red light.

Self's movie doesn't happen. The money collapses, and Self with it. Later, recuperating from his suicide attempt, he learns that Goodney had set him up in a scam to collect non-completion insurance. Self, who reads *Animal Farm* and thinks it's a book about animals, has been equally obtuse about the real world. He thought that to live the enchanted life of wealth was freedom. But by being divested of his cash, he learns that only the disenchanted are free. "I was the key . . . I was the wanting artist. I wanted to believe. I wanted money so bad," he says of his addiction, which turns into a joke on him. "Me and my no-confidence trick. 'Confidence' I now regard as a psychopathic state. I mean, you look at all that out there, and what you feel is confidence?"

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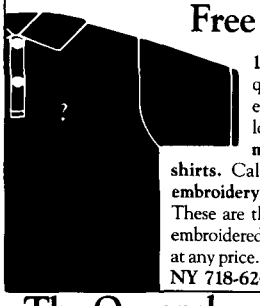

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Amis's peppy prose rhythms catch the moral exhaustion in Self's compulsion to evade himself.

> At a sickening speed I have roared and clattered, I have rocketted through my time, breaking all the limits, time limits, speed limits, jumping lights and cutting corners. . . . I have lived headlong at a desperate rhythm. I want to slow down. I want some semi-colons.

Self's failure is his blessing. He is forced to encounter the world, not buy his way out of it. He begins an authentic relationship, lives not in expectation but in the moment, a gift about which he's still uncertain. "Now my life is only present, more present, continuous present."

He also begins to talk the language of community: "Life is an aggregate of all the lives that have been lived on the planet earth." Self is on the way to adulthood. "How can you live seriously if you don't know who you are," he says with a new gravity, now at least aware of his problem. His life has been a farce and his collapse bears witness to the truth of farce momentum: at a certain speed all things disintegrate. But the process has been reversed. The author leaves Self at the finale watching by the window as his new girlfriend returns home. He is living for a human encounter, not for a fantasy of material escape.

Money: A Suicide Note, like its central character, is a sprawling, fierce, vulgar display, full of Amis's quirky but articulate energy. It's an expert comic riff that is a panic. Jonathan Self is a complex and superbly imagined character through whom Amis is also vaccinating himself from the infection of ambition. It's an honorable novelistic goal, and a disturbing one. "If you want to make Pythocles rich," said Epicurus, "do not give him money, but diminish his desire."

JOHN LAHR

John Lahr is the author most recently of *Automatic Vaudeville: Essays on Star Turns* (Knopf).

LIBERAL IN THE PULPIT

Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet by Robert Moats Miller

(Oxford University Press, 608 pp., $34.50)

Leaving aside the examples of Martin Luther King and Jesse Jackson, it often seems as though the most characteristic voices of American religiosity in the 20th century have come from the right. From Billy Sunday and Father Coughlin to Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell, the Christian message has normally been delivered in tones that were silky or strident but always conservative. So it is refreshing to be reminded, by Robert Moats Miller's massive biography of Harry Emerson Fosdick, that not all America's clerical celebrities were Catholic reactionaries or Bible-pounding fundamentalists.

Fosdick was a certified liberal, a man who marched resolutely down the middle of every road, taking sensible stands on every issue, whether theological or secular—a sort of Stanley Kramer of the Protestant pulpit. Along the way, he turned himself into a best-selling author and a master of the media (in this case, radio). Thus his stature and popularity belie the illusion that the left enjoyed no august sermonizers of its own.

Indeed, Miller—a professor of history at the University of North Carolina—states flatly in his opening sentence that "no American Protestant minister has exceeded the prominence of Harry Emerson Fosdick." Not content with calling Fosdick "vastly influential," Miller additionally insists that "he was a great human being." The following 600 pages read like an extended footnote to these assertions. But because of its voracious accumulation of detail, its lengthy quotations from sermons and letters and books and memoirs, and its tenacity in recording Fosdick's positions on all matters of public moment, this biography is nothing if not persuasive.

Fosdick surely deserves to be remembered. Born in Buffalo in 1878, he was a product of the old-stock, inner-directed, small-town middle class that found its assumptions and values thoroughly obliterated by life in the 20th century. Fosdick adapted to the modern world more successfully than most of his contemporaries. He was educated at Colgate, Columbia, and Union Theological Seminary, learning early the precepts of the Social Gospel movement and committing himself just as early to the propagation of an up-to-date, cosmopolitan Christianity.

THEREAFTER he fought all the good fights. Ordained as a Baptist minister, Fosdick believed in interdenominational worship, and he practiced what he preached as head of New York City's Riverside Church from 1930 to 1946. This capacity for tolerance and rationality, together with his defense of evolution, earned him the everlasting wrath of fundamentalists of every sectarian persuasion. Meanwhile, despite the presence of John D. Rockefeller Jr. as his lifelong patron, Fosdick spoke out on the class struggle in the thirties, endorsed labor's right to organize, and welcomed the New Deal. He also denounced Nazi atrocities from the beginning of Hitler's reign, campaigned for more relaxed immigration quotas to permit Jewish refugees to enter the United States, supported civil liberties and the civil rights movement, opposed America's intervention both in World War II and Vietnam, and hoped the United Nations could somehow control the proliferation of nuclear arms.

As if these battles were not sufficient for a full life, Fosdick managed to occupy a professorship at Union and become the star of NBC's "National Vespers Hour," broadcasting sermons to a nationwide audience on Sunday afternoons for two decades until the mid-forties. By the time he died in 1969, Fosdick had even found time to write more than 1,000 articles and 50 books. (His best known was appropriately titled *On Being a Real Person*, a pastiche of lay psychology, self-help moralisms, middlebrow literary allusions, and meliorist Protestantism, all of which reflected his pastoral temperament and his interest—however superficial—in the latest pronouncements of mental health experts.)

At times Miller seems swept away by the apparent perfection of the man. He portrays Fosdick as high-minded yet practical, unflinching in all his cru-

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sades, controversial while bearing no grudges, modest but self-confident, neither vain nor dour, efficient but warm toward his subordinates, a person of Aristotelian virtue.

Yet Fosdick was no liberal saint, nor does Miller engage in hagiography. Rather, he dutifully points out the blind spots. Fosdick's Victorian sensibility fed his suspicion of movies, jazz, alcohol, and modernist fiction. His invincible faith in reason and progress rendered him impervious to the insights of Reinhold Niebuhr's neoorthodoxy. Moreover, Fosdick preached to a congregation composed largely of upper-middle-class professionals, businessmen, and social workers—the type of constituency that reinforced his own sense of cultural superiority. They seemed equally receptive to his priggish advice on the complexities of marriage and sex, as well as his self-righteous assurance that he knew what was best for the lower orders. Though Miller intends no such comparison, Fosdick's serene obliviousness to anything ironic or absurd, and his tendency to prescribe the most fashionable bromides for the solutions of people's private dilemmas, make him a perfect prototype for the Reverend Eccles in John Updike's *Rabbit Run*.

There are obvious problems with this book, particularly with its organization and style. It is clearly too long. Instead of summarizing Fosdick's positions on various issues, Miller laboriously piles quotations upon quotations, virtually begging the reader to skim Fosdick's windy rhetoric until he arrives at Miller's usually perceptive interpretations and conclusions. In addition, the transitions within and between chapters are sometimes painfully mechanical. Miller appears to be a devoted practitioner of the "Let us now turn to . . ." school of writing. He constantly addresses the reader in the manner of a patient schoolteacher lecturing especially dim-witted students, telling us what he's going to take up next, then making sure we know exactly where we've just been. Perhaps he has spent too much time poring over Fosdick's sermons, which his prose too often unconsciously mimics.

All this notwithstanding, Fosdick was an important figure in the history of both Protestantism and liberalism. He stood at the center of nearly every major political and cultural conflict in 20th-century America. And on most occasions, his declarations were notably courageous. For these reasons, Miller has done us a valuable service by describing Fosdick's career, and thereby recalling the contributions the religious left once made (and still might make) to the nation's public debate.

RICHARD PELLS

Richard Pells, professor of history at the University of Texas, is the author of *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* (Harper & Row).

THE WIRED WEST

Blood Meridian or The Evening Redness in the West by Cormac McCarthy

(Random House, 337 pp., $17.95)

Cormac McCarthy's fifth novel is about cowboys and Indians. It tells the gruesome tale of a nameless drifter, introduced as "the kid," who heads west to Texas in the year 1847 when he is 14 years old. He falls in with bands of marauders, witnesses an immense amount of slaughter, becomes a dazed and psychopathic killer, survives a few massacres, and dies horribly in an outhouse. *Red River* this ain't. The kid's story parodies our popular Westerns; John Wayne's rugged individualism grows here into a crazed licentiousness, and the challenge of starting society anew, epitomized by the well-scrubbed little community in *Shane*, is transformed into the rootless quest for blood, money, loot, and women.

The kid himself acts out nightmarish possibilities of the American dream. He is no buckskinned and baby-faced Alan Ladd, but a monster, a panhandle Caliban. He is unkempt, uncared for, stupid, and mean: "He can neither read nor write and in him broods already a taste for mindless violence." The American West that the kid travels through is both beautiful and hellish, at times a frontier full of promise, at times a stark terrain offering only empty vistas and blind calamity.

MCCARTHY'S landscape is his real protagonist, looming over the kid's story like some perverse deity or idiot narrator, turning horrible and benign in dark mimicry of the trail of destruction that the kid and his companions ride. The wild country is vividly brought to life in McCarthy's highly wrought prose:

> They rode on. By noon they had begun to climb toward the gap in the mountains. Riding up through wild lavender or soapweed, under the Animas peaks. The shadow of an eagle that had set forth from those high and craggy fastnesses crossed the line of riders below and they looked up to mark it where it rode in that brittle blue and faultless void. They came up through pinon and scrub oak and they crossed the gap through a high pine forest and rode on through the mountains.
>
> In the evening they came out upon a mesa that overlooked all the country to the north. . . . The crumpled butcher-paper mountains lay in sharp shadowfold under the long blue dusk and in the middle distance the glazed bed of a dry lake lay shimmering like the mare imbrium and herds of deer were moving in the last of the twilight, harried over the plain by wolves who were themselves the color of the desert floor.

Blood Meridian is full of evocative passages like this one. Unfortunately, they're surrounded by the rest of the novel, which is tedious and contrived. There are hundreds of brutal killings in this book. Dying men are sodomized, babies are strung up through their mouths and tied to trees, a tame dancing bear is shot full of holes and bleeds to death in the arms of its little girl keeper. Everyone the kid meets is either a killer, a victim, or a pervert. Everywhere he goes turns into a scene of horrible massacre or sickening degeneracy. None of this grotesquerie earns its place in the landscape, or in the kid's story.

McCarthy, who is a serious and accomplished novelist, has failed in *Blood Meridian* to retell a simple Western in his haunting, original voice. In his previous novels, he wrote authentic high Southern gothic tales, set in the backwoods of the hill country. Although true to their period and landscape, they

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were imbued with an edginess, a kind of hallucinogenic despair, that felt wholly contemporary.

Outer Dark (1968) and *Child of God* (1973), for example, are chilling and absorbing stories steeped in violence and depravity. But the crimes McCarthy details there grow uncannily, frighteningly out of the closely observed lives of his characters and their surroundings. He writes spare prose rich in the slightly archaic vocabulary of his Appalachian settings, and in his dialogue faithfully recreates the region's language, the cadences and textures of the country's rural poor. McCarthy has lived most of his life outside of Knoxville, Tennessee, and knows the hills and hollows of the mountain country intimately; he also knows the lunatic, hidden places in the hearts and minds of some of the people who live there.

But in *Blood Meridian* he has nearly abandoned these strengths to try his hand at myth and metaphysics. The grim and patient character development, the crisp narration of the earlier novels are junked; what's left is hyperbolic violence, strained surrealism, and pseudo-philosophic palaver, spewed forth from the mouth of the bizarre Judge Holden: "The way of the world is to bloom and to flower and die but in the affairs of men there is no waning and the noon of his expression signals the onset of night." Holden, along with John Joel Glanton and a few other characters in the novel, was an actual historical figure, an obscure, despicable Indian-killer. Here, he is The Man Who Never Shuts Up. He may also be the devil.

Blood Meridian is McCarthy's grand attempt to extend and deepen his exploration of the beastly potential inherent in the American character, in the vastness of the American continent. But his sharp sensibility for the random destruction the country's "outlaws" can wreak on the society that's passed them by, for the rootlessness and alienation that can turn in a twisted mind into a murderous liberty—this sensibility convinces only when it is acutely dramatized in the lives of small characters and in the empty concreteness of their country.

But in *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy ends up merely toying with his language and ideas. We are neither afraid to look at what he sees, nor moved to think about his vision of America. This novel, despite its chronicling of appalling horrors and its straining for apocalyptic effects, is boring. McCarthy should go home, and take another, closer look. He'll find the real devil soon enough there.

TERENCE MORAN

A worm's-eye view of the (g)literati.

MEMOIRS OF A COAT CHECK GIRL

BY HELEN ROGAN

THE RESTAURANT was Italian and chic. It served excellent food, but in most other respects it resembled Elaine's. It had several choice tables up front, a long mahogany-topped bar stretching halfway to the back, and then the main dining room, with a few too many tables for comfort and quite enough for profit. White walls, oak paneling, voluptuous flower arrangements, bentwood chairs. The whole effect was civilized and soothing. Like other such establishments on Manhattan's Upper East Side, it attracted a mix of the fashionable and the well-heeled: record and movie company executives, garment-district types, lawyers and doctors, journalists and publishers, motley celebrities, all of them looking to star in their evening out, ready to be delighted should things go their way or to make a big scene if the script didn't turn out exactly as they had planned.

I worked there, as a coat check, one or two nights a week for two winters. It started when I was between jobs, as they say, with a book just published, advances vanished, and a stack of debts. In due course I began editing for a national magazine, but the pay didn't make much of a dent in the debt stack. Checking coats offered not only cash (from $60 to $120 for six hours of work) and the aerobic virtue in racing down to and up from the basement coatroom, but also, and best of all, a great seat at the show.

FROM MY worm's-eye view, every diner was primarily a person with clobber. The parties of three or four men, lawyers or Wall Street types après-racketball at the Downtown Athletic Club, would hand over the Burberry and scarf, the briefcase, the gym bag, the racket, all multiplied by three or four and delivered with hearty admiration: "You must be in very good shape to do this job!" I recognized many of the publishers who luxuriated in good food and equally in talking about it, and the ones I didn't could be identified by the poundage they hauled: L. L. Bean creels and totes bulging with boxed manuscripts and the fat Spring Announcements issue of *Publishers Weekly*. There were also the bulky parkas and precious furs and dripping umbrellas and hats that must not be crushed, and at Christmastime the many outsized and brightly hued bags of festive shoppers.

Variously laden, I would embark on the 14 narrow steps down to the basement, which contained the ladies' and men's rooms and the pay phone. Here, too, was the food storage room that served as the coatroom, and could be opened only by punching a three-digit code into the lock while simultaneously turning the latch. The process required two hands, and it was not unknown for coat checks to drop a few things during the maneuver.

The storeroom contained cartons of tomato paste, crates of Italian wine, cans of anchovies. To one side was the pasta machine, dusted with flour; to the other, walk-in refrigerators. Dotted around were 30 or 40 chairs I had unstacked earlier in the evening. With the sound of the drip from the ice-machine pipe, and the fragrance of soiled uniforms ripening, this was my domain.

On a busy night, when I might be making 120 trips up and down and hefting as many bundles of belongings, the prime spaces on chairs, crates, and cartons ran out fast. I would find a clean tablecloth, hurl it to the floor, tastefully pile the coats on it (with the numbered check on top), and then head upstairs again, pausing only to move any coats that the busboys, in filching

Helen Rogan is a New York journalist.

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chairs for diners, had shifted to one space that was supposed to be kept free under the dripping ice-machine pipe.

In the quiet early evening, the waiters, mostly dapper Italians and highly professional (not an actor among them), hung around at the bar, teasing one another and fidgeting like racehorses at the gate. They fell eagerly on the nice families, regulars who lived in the neighborhood and saw the evening out as something of a treat. The nice families were sunny and well-disposed, down to even the adolescent children—fearsome-looking girls with turquoise hair and a sweet manner, and spotty boys almost too shy to speak. The boys were often entrusted with the coat question as a way of training them for the responsibilities of adult life.

Other early comers were the dowdy couples (firmly discouraged during the rush hour) and the dreaded ladies-in-groups, three or four well-tailored women determined to avoid the hurly-burly. They would clutch their belongings as they were shown to their seats and look around neurotically to make sure they weren't being deprived of a better table. Over what seemed like hours, they would eat only the delicate items, and drink maybe a glass of wine each. With a polite smile, they would leave the smallest amount possible for the waiter and me.

THE EIGHT TO 9:30 rush presented the owners with several variants on one problem: how to keep people happy while they waited for their table. Restaurants have to overbook, owners say, because people are prone to cancel, or they arrive an hour late, or they just don't appear. The nights when nobody cancels usually coincide with the nights when the ladies-in-groups choose to sit and sit.

At this restaurant most people submitted to 20 minutes of gridlock as long as they were treated civilly. Some actively loved it; they assumed that it was all part of the chic thrill. Standing at the bar and looking around at the tanned faces and gleaming jewelry, they would ask me shyly if any celebrities were there right at that moment. Often I had to explain that the people who looked as if they might be celebrities were doctors, and that the only actual celebrities present—people like, say, Clay Felker or Jerry Zipkin or Peter Duchin—were not the immediately recognizable kind.

Famous people were led to the very exposed tables up front, tables that everyone must pass and that the waiting throng actually lapped up against. Few celebrities were so retiring that they would decline this experience (Philip Roth and Dinah Shore scored high marks with us for their discretion). Most sat at their ease, listening to the waiter's mellifluous recital of the specials, as if the gawking proles—about 18 inches away—simply did not exist. Celebrities even chose to sit outward, facing the throng. Beyond this strange failing, they were either taller (Lauren Bacall) or shorter (Tom Brokaw) than one had anticipated, but otherwise they were dull. They would just have dinner and leave. And when Anthony Quinn's party came in, there was no plate smashing.

AS FOR THE waiting throng, the one circumstance that would make even its most docile members paranoid was being bumped from their place in the queue. Doctors, accustomed to seeing everyone but themselves in line, were the most vigilant. "I'm Dr. Ingrams," they would roar. In the thick of it all, one of the owners would frown over his runic markings in the reservations book. He had been known on occasion to spit contempt at the more querulous customers.

Trying to stay out of trouble, I monitored the diners' idiosyncrasies: the models siphoning off the sauce from their pasta noodles; the old, prosperous men with the sleek and demonstrative young women who looked like models; infants falling asleep under the table on the piled-up coats their parents had withheld from me for that purpose. Upstairs, men showed off by getting business calls, and downstairs the ones who'd given up smoking sneaked a furtive puff or several out of sight of their spouses. In a corner at the back, the famous novelist would talk away, in his famous witty anecdotal style, as the young literary sycophant leaned forward, chin on elbow, his little face pink with excitement. Elsewhere nine dour-looking Germans in raincoats would borrow a telephone book and scour it for jazz club listings.

All the while, intense activity at the pay phone. They liked to telephone: the doctors checking on patients; the young crowd hoping to persuade their friends to meet them for nightcaps; the drunks having long, halting fights punctuated by pauses of heavy breathing; and, by far the most frequent, the mothers guiltily calling their children to check on homework, brushed teeth, and spiritual welfare, speaking in sweet reasonable voices as if to make it clear to anyone who might overhear that this woman is too a good mother even if she does happen to be out in a cloud of perfume, chowing down on osso buco with her new boyfriend.

Diana Ross came in late one night, wearing a scarlet dress, at exactly the moment a Supremes hit from 20 years earlier was on the tape deck. And just when everyone had adjusted to that, a stripper-gram suddenly appeared at the Diana Ross table in the front. Afterward, men who had been sitting at the back came up to me, casually clearing

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"ON *60 Minutes*, Jimmy Carter blamed 'Reagan' (the cardigan-clad Georgian eschews formalities) for the ruinous deficit, the end of our human-rights policy, our disposition to send American troops everywhere. Could it be that Carter is thinking of running again in '88? Don't laugh. He's the only Democrat to carry more than one state in any of the last four presidential elections, and he did it twice."

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their throats to ask, "Did she take everything off?" (almost). Then they trotted over to engage the lady in serious conversation about her ancient art.

At exactly ten o'clock I would gulp my first long glass of grapefruit juice with double gin ("mother's ruin," as we used to call it in England). I needed reinforcements for the evening's most challenging moments. I might have mixed up two minks, for example, or let a coat check ticket disappear into some mossy corner of the basement. One night I broke a customer's bottle of praline liqueur, which flooded all over the Estée Lauder Cellular Night Repair and catnip chocolate drops that were also in her shopping bag.

An acquaintance in the trade told me about the time that a flypaper strip fell, with its full cargo, onto a black mink under her care. Unable to remove the noxious stickiness, she just handed the coat to its owner, who, with a shriek, encountered the problem. Minutes later she was still exclaiming, "How can it have got so sticky? What could be so sticky?" while my acquaintance murmured lamely, "Tonic water?"

Most of my coatroom crises were smaller, and predictable. People asking me to fetch their cigarettes would say brightly, "It's the Burberry!" unaware that there were up to 20 Burberrys in a row downstairs. "Not on a wire hanger," scolded the rangy ladies with creased makeup. "Not on a hook!" said the men from the garment district who were so proud of the navy cashmere number they had bought on their last business trip to London. People would insist that I had never given them a ticket. People would swear that I had planted a spot on their camel hair coat. One drunk woman, who refused to check her coat, yelled, "I'm keeping this fur forever, because I worked hard for it!"

Sometimes people insisted on barging into the coatroom. It was never a good idea. Civilians could not understand. Their untutored eye might only see precious furs on a greasy floor, and that misapprehension could make them upset, even vengeful. I have heard stories of four or five people stooped and picking over a heap of coats like vultures, ululating the while. On occasion I would simply slam the coatroom door in diners' faces and pretend to be deaf to the sound of the pathetic bleating and scratching noises outside.

On my first evening as a coat check, one of the owners pushed me toward a fur, hissing, "Furs are good! Don't see people, see money! Think of yourself as a predator!" I've learned a few things since then, but not how to fathom the inconsistencies in people's behavior when it's time to stuff a couple of crumpled bills into the hand of the help. The consensus in the literature of tipping is that 75 cents is the minimum for one coat, a dollar is appropriate for two, and beyond that is a matter of choice and common sense. At this restaurant the coat check's job involved more than sitting in a little pen and glumly contemplating a bowl of powdery mints and the draft coming through the door with each customer. I became quite skilled at the niceties. I learned that it makes the man feel mythic, like Sam Shepard, if you give him the lady's coat first, so that he can help her on with it and then be helped in his turn by the coat check, his handmaiden. I experimented with demeanor. Deferentially smiling up through lowered eyes (à la Princess Di) was a winner but quite hard to sustain without a lot of gin. Calling people "sir" or "ma'am" was particularly good with the under-thirties. The less stolid sort of man liked it when I put his hat on my head roguishly to transport it downstairs.

Being overtly flirtatious was more trouble than it was worth. One coat check, who had a doe-eyed nubile look, was offered $4,000 by a man if she would only open her blouse. She was an art student who needed the money, but she refused because she didn't believe him. Others, a little longer in the tooth than she, have had similar experiences with male customers—some slurred flattery on the stairs ("Nice tits," one stock-market bull would say to another) or an occasional grandiose gesture. A rather attractive and, I was told, very rich developer coyly wound his silk evening scarf around my neck one night. A week or so later he was back, but impassive. One of the owners remarked, "He's with his wife tonight."

Here follows a detailed list of the people who pinched my rear end: (1) a publisher; (2) the same publisher.

CELEBRITIES were not among the nice tippers, like the South Americans, or the smiling man in a cable-knit sweater who regularly gave me five dollars—maybe ten for his family. One night an Italian family of nine, with dark-eyed tiny girls in party dresses and a looming grandmother, sat in splendor at a celebrity table in the front of the restaurant. They gave me very little to do, but they left me a ten-dollar tip all the same. Why? Because they were the family of one of the chefs and they knew the form.

Some people would press a meager amount into my palm as if it were diamonds. I once tried to use my British accent on a British journalist and socialite who I hoped might shell out a little more for a fellow expatriate down on her luck. Shifting through his pockets with a distracted expression, he came up with 80 cents in very small change for two coats, a patronizing pat on the shoulder, and ultimate indignity, "There you go, dearie," as lord-of-the-manor to serf.

I still brood about the people who stiffed me altogether. Parties of six or eight, each member reluctant to take individual responsibility, would look around anxiously and then dash for the door. A group of businesswomen were quick to spot my competence as I swiftly handed each one the right briefcase or umbrella. "Excellent," one of them murmured, smiling appreciatively as she and her colleagues turned their suited backs and left.

The worst offenders were Europeans,

KERENSKY'S GLASSES

Mist illuminates us, lets us see
line and distance, the animal silhouette
of mountains and their interlock with clarity,
their recession as they grow more white
with distance. Mist settles in the valleys,
fills them with brilliance, defining, defining, belly
and arched back, the line of jaw and knees,
the land's harmonious dismembered body.

On a clear day when the line of sight will run
as far as Canada, the bodies blur
into one, buried in detail, and the one
you cannot find, the sense of her exact distance,
breathing, with her faint sweat—losing her
in all that far-seeing, that clairvoyance.

BARRY GOLDENSOHN

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ungracious because of their class consciousness. Parties of suave Italians in the new unstructured items and patent-leather hair would take armloads of shiny limp little coats from me and then just turn away with terse thanks.

I was happier with the customers who behaved as if coat checks were deaf or blind. Seymour Hersh, for example, who was dining with his publisher, a regular, was amazed to find me coming to meet them with their baggage as they left the table. No big deal—it was late, only a few diners were left. But he said loudly as they walked to the door, "My God, did you see that! She brought us our coats before we asked for them! That's the most astonishing thing I ever saw." So much for the life of the investigative journalist.

As 11 o'clock approached, the expense account "garmentos" were on their way out. The wives would go down to the bathroom in a covey, dishing the dirt: "The one in the black and white—she's so well put together and so ugly. Did you see her face?" They would stay downstairs for a long time, trading secrets about their husbands, who would wait, and wait, upstairs, looking sheepish and helpless, with their arms full of coats.

Whenever the crowd at the bar thinned, I would wander over to plumb the ancient wisdom of the barman. Barmen have seen it all; they have lost their childlike sense of wonder. They can tell you about the people who don't know wine and will plump for a Riesling because they have heard the name, and then send it back in disgust. They can spot out-of-towners at the door (a suspicious but impressed look) and at the table (iced tea and piña coladas). They know which ladies stashed the silver ashtrays in their purses and which animated group has had a lot of cocaine. They can give you the official verdict on Gloria Vanderbilt: "We like her, but she combed her hair at the table and we think that's unacceptable."

The late hours were precious. If the evening had gone well, one of the owners would turn off the hideous Italian pop music and put sixties hits on the tape deck, snapping his fingers and swaying to the tinny beat. The waiters loosened up, waiting for a table at the back to come free so that they could sit down for dinner. After polishing off half a bottle of Pouligny-Montrachet left by some feckless fool, I'd be ready to sit alone and eat shrimp and the salad (arugula, radicchio, endive, mushroom, pepper) I had been yearning for over the past couple of hours.

On a particularly benign night, tables and chairs were pushed back so that the old faithfuls could get up and gyrate. The chef emerged, exhausted and sweaty, and sat for a cigarette. The Greek waiter might feel required to climb onto a table and dance. The lights were dim, there was a feeling of fatigue and camaraderie. The two former waiters who left to open their own place a couple of blocks south would come in, bundled up and grinning. Lots of hugs and Italian greetings; everyone sitting at the same table with a bottle of cognac, even the South American busboys in their parkas, all smiling and mute because they spoke neither English nor Italian.

The scene as I remember it is mellow and after hours, with the mood of a Hopper painting. The few remaining customers seem to merge and fade into the backdrop; the conversation could drift on for hours, but with legs aching I collect my bulging purse, come slowly up the 14 stairs for the last time, and let myself out. Full of a sentimental glow of solidarity with all those who work late and keep this glorious nation humming, et cetera, I hail a cab, already in my mind unfolding my tips, stacking the bills in piles of ten on the carpet. The cabbie announces sonorously that he's written a sequel to "Strangers in the Night." He half-talks, half-sings a few phrases and then tells me he has sent it to Nelson Riddle.

TRB, *from page 4*

that much. Experts say it's not so much that money helps you to win; it's that being favored to win helps you to raise money. If so, this means that most political giving is motivated less by a desire to influence the result of an election than by a desire to influence the winner. And that, in turn, is a good working definition of the difference between healthy activism and unhealthy corruption.

Those experts say the average Senate incumbent will have to spend $3.5 million running for reelection in 1986. That's a 366-percent increase since he or she ran the last time. Part of this is due to the increasing professionalization and technologizing of campaigns, as high-priced consultants and fancy computerized voter-contact operations replace the party hacks and housewife volunteers of yesteryear. Part may be self-feeding momentum, as the ability to spend money keeps pace with the ability to raise it. But the largest factor is the increasing use and cost of television and radio advertising. Half or more of our average incumbent's $3.5 million in 1986 will go for broadcast time.

Cut now to Wall Street. There is a boom in media stocks. ABC went for $3.5 billion, a large chunk of which represents the value of network-owned local radio and TV stations. A Dayton, Ohio, station that sold for $13 million in 1976 and again for $50 million in 1981 is now estimated to be worth $100 million. Why? "Tremendous growth in television advertising levels," meaning rates, explains *The Washington Post*. TV stations "produce 50 cents of cash . . . for every dollar of revenue," double the typical industry, says *The New York Times*.

A network-affiliated television station in a major market, worth $300 million or more, may have physical assets of under ten million dollars. Almost all the rest represents the value of the television license, presented on a platter, free as air, by the federal government. This idiocy is compounded when the government turns around and *buys back* the airtime it gave away for free, as it does in effect with federal funding of presidential election campaigns. By law, political candidates are entitled to airtime at the cheapest commercial rate. In October 1980 that was $28,000 for a half-hour of national prime time. In 1984 it was $50,000. In 1988, who knows? Local rates have increased commensurately.

The cost of political campaigns could be cut in half overnight if candidates didn't have to pay for access to television and radio. That would cut in half the trouble money causes as well. Equal access to television for major candidates (with thresholds and protections for minor candidates similar to those for federal money at the presidential level) would instantly balance access to the most important communications medium, without infringing upon anyone's First Amendment rights. If TV stations can't be expected to pay the real value of their broadcast licenses (and precisely because they're such a powerful propaganda medium, they can't), giving away a bit of airtime in election season is the least they can be required to do.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

The Art of Revival

TEN YEARS AGO at this time there were no living ex-presidents. Now there are three: Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter. As a trio they do not quite match John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe, who were all alive after Monroe left office in 1825 until July 4, 1826. Two of our batch have just published books, both unfortunate. Nixon writes about Vietnam, and Jimmy Carter about the Middle East, each from his experience in office, interpreting the events rather casually for self-serving reasons. This makes me revive my long-standing idea that ex-presidents should be encouraged to follow the example of John Quincy Adams and run for the House of Representatives after they leave the White House. Adams won a new renown during his 17 years in Congress. John Kennedy would have been only 50 at the end of two full terms; would he not have sought elective office again? If not, why not? Our ex-presidents today build libraries bigger than mausoleums, make speeches for exorbitant fees, settle old scores, write second-rate books, grow self-important in ratio to their diminishing importance, and are generally an embarrassment to their families and their countrymen. Why should Jimmy Carter, relatively still young, think it beneath a former president to represent the Third District of Georgia—assuming, of course, the Third District would have him?

IT IS 20 YEARS this spring since I first set foot on American soil. I was the same age on arrival as Columbus when he first landed a little further to the south. It was possible for someone of my generation in England to be raised in thorough ignorance of America; our elders were determined that we should receive no messages from that Babylon across the sea. I therefore arrived at Dulles Airport believing that Washington the capital must be in the state of Washington. The drive from Dulles into the city seemed (as it still does) to take us only deeper into verdant countryside, and the cab driver was convulsed when I said to him after 20 minutes that I did not want a complete tour of "the state of Washington." Taking a cab at all was a disappointment. From the movies I had expected to arrive at Dulles and find a honey blond in a long convertible with the top down who had been given the car by Daddy for the summer and would offer (in a Southern drawl, natch) to drive me round the country. This has never happened, even in Texas, and I have given up hope.

BUT A REDHEAD in Washington did show me the capital and some of the rest of the East Coast for the first time. She took me one day to Mount Vernon. As we strolled up the drive, there unfolded before us a fertile and lovely land, stretching endlessly toward the Ohio Valley. I gasped: "So this is why you threw us out. If I had gazed on all this land, I would have thrown us out." My friend smiled tolerantly at this materialistic interpretation of her Revolution, but I later learned from biographies of Washington and others that this was in fact one of the inspirations of the colonials, especially the Virginians. After the French had been driven out by 1763, they saw all that land open to them to make their own, whereas George III and his ministers were really interested in America only as a maritime province with which to trade. On another day we went to Monticello. The guide was indeed a Southern honey blond, and I was entranced by her silken words. At the end of the tour, she asked if we had any questions. "Where did he keep his slaves?" I asked. The other tourists looked at me in appalled silence. The guide swallowed hard but kept her composure: "The slaves' quarters are not included in the official tour." My friend hurried me out before I could ask why not: "*I'll* show you the slaves' quarters. You don't have to ask a Virginian." In New York a little later we were walking down Lexington Avenue, and I was gazing at all the odd "foreign" people pushing by. "Are these what you call ethnics?" I asked. She said: "Sh-sh, keep your voice down." What was I allowed to ask? Everything was very, very different from what I had expected. No experience (historical or contemporary) seemed to coincide with my own or anything I had known in Europe. I found it all enthralling, and I still retain much of that wonder.

A YOUNG ARCHITECT in Washington asked me and a friend to his office the other evening. The plaque outside it reads: "Richard Ridley Associates—Architect and Urban Designer." The "Urban Designer" is important. Richard is passionately concerned that cities should keep or recover their vitality. His own office—not in a high rise among the swank lawyers, but right downtown on the second floor of an old small building—is a symbol. A strong building can be saved by finding a present use for it. He worked on the restoration of the Old Georgetown Market, once dilapidated and forlorn on a ruined waterfront, so that it is now a genuine market true to its old function. Congress over the years has funded a series of disastrous and costly efforts to find a use for the magnificent building of Union Station, even to the extent of banishing the trains to a hidden area in the rear. Richard has given testimony urging that the trains be brought back into the center of the station, and the kind of city life generated round them (and the subway) that draws crowds other than travelers to Grand Central in New York. The place should have bustle. And just as he studies the personal lives of clients before he designs or renovates a house for them, so he studies how people use their cities and public places. He once pointed out to me that people do not always cross an intersection in the way planners intended; they do not even always take the shortest route from A to B, because they may want to look at the shops or something else. He has promised to show me a study he made of how senators and their aides use the Senate wing of the Capitol; I am sure it will tell more than any political scientist's study of what senators actually do. Richard advises many historic preservation groups in Washington, and in all cities these groups need the advice of someone like him: trained eyes that can see how the past can best be kept by making a living city now that people will use, rather than designating an "Historic Area" and imposing on the rest of the city those modern malls and gallerias that will be empty after 6 p.m. People like Richard Ridley and his colleagues show you that even now our diminished, humiliated cities can be made to pulse with life.

H.F.

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"...discrimination is discrimination, no matter what it is based on."

Smokers Get a Raw Deal

By Stanley S. Scott

The civil rights act, the voting rights act and a host of antidiscrimination laws notwithstanding, millions of Americans are still forced to sit in the back of planes, trains and buses. Many more are subject to segregation in public places. Some are even denied housing and employment: victims of an alarming — yet socially acceptable — public hostility.

This new form of discrimination is based on smoking behavior.

If you happen to enjoy a cigarette, you are the potential target of violent antismokers and overzealous public enforcers determined to force their beliefs on the rest of society.

Ever since people began smoking, smokers and nonsmokers have been able to live with one another using common courtesy and common sense. Not anymore. Today, smokers must put up with virtually unenforceable laws regulating when and where they can smoke — laws intended as much to discourage smoking itself as to protect the rights of nonsmokers. Much worse, supposedly responsible organizations devoted to the "public interest" are encouraging the harassment of those who smoke.

This year, for example, the American Cancer Society is promoting programs that encourage people to attack smokers with cannisters of gas, to blast them with horns, to squirt them with oversized water guns and burn them in effigy.

Stanley S. Scott is vice president and director of corporate affairs of Philip Morris Inc.

Zealots, stop maltreating cigarette users

Harmless fun? Not quite. Consider the incidents that are appearing on police blotters across America:

- In a New York restaurant, a young man celebrating with friends was zapped in the face by a man with an aerosol spray can. His offense: lighting a cigarette. The aggressor was the head of a militant antismoker organization whose goal is to mobilize an army of two million zealots to spray smokers in the face.
- In a suburban Seattle drug store, a man puffing on a cigarette while he waited for a prescription to be filled was ordered to stop by an elderly customer who pulled a gun on him.
- A 23-year-old lit up a cigarette on a Los Angeles bus. A passenger objected. When the smoker objected to the objection, he was fatally stabbed.
- A transit policeman, using his reserve gun, shot and fatally wounded a man on a subway train in the Bronx in a shootout over smoking a cigarette.

The basic freedoms of more than 50 million American smokers are at risk today. Tomorrow, who knows what personal behavior will become socially unacceptable, subject to restrictive laws and public ridicule? Could travel by private car make the social engineers' hit list because it is less safe than public transit? Could ice cream, cake and cookies become socially unacceptable because their consumption causes obesity? What about sky diving, mountain climbing, skiing and contact sports? How far will we allow this to spread?

The question all Americans must ask themselves is: can a nation that has struggled so valiantly to eliminate bias based on race, religion and sex afford to allow a fresh set of categories to encourage new forms of hostility between large groups of citizens?

After all, discrimination is discrimination, no matter what it is based on. □

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